BAJI RAO I
THE GREAT PESHWA



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Courtesy, Bharata Ithihasa Scmshodaka Mandala, Poona

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Preface

I HAVE ATTEMPTED in the following pages to sketch the career of one of the most remarkable personages who have played their parts on the stage of Indian History. It was a momentous time in which he lived. The continuance of the independence of his people demanded from him great energy, enterprise and daring. He had to wage long wars, unite a recalcitrant and warring people, overcome cunning and astute enemies, and extend the frontiers of the homeland. He was a conqueror, a liberator and an empire builder.

The campaigns which Baji Rao I had to conduct were arduous and exacting. The enemies he encountered were most daring and long-disciplined in the art of warfare and well-versed in diplomacy. Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah, the founder of the Hyderabad State, was no ordinary soldier. He was one of the great generals of his time. Well trained in the art of diplomacy and very ambitious the Nizam proved to be a formidable opponent of Peshwa Baji Rao. The Nizam weaved a web of intrigue and made grand alliances with the disgruntled nobility of Maharashtra with a view to destroy the authority of King Shahu and his Peshwa. The successive victories of Baji Rao over the Nizam, single him out as an outstanding leader of men. It was not merely the

Nizam, the Sidis of Janjira and the Portuguese whom the Peshwa had to reckon with. He had also to combat rivals from his own people. Trimbak Rao Dabhade, Sambhaji and others were in league with the Nizam and had to be dealt with appropriately by Baji Rao.

The career of Baji Rao is thus a glorious one for it was the policy which this second founder of the Maratha empire initiated that enabled the Marathas to cross the Narmada and enter Hindustan as an imperial power. The tottering Mughal Empire lay prostrate and it was Peshwa Baji Rao I who showed the way for his successors to become, in course of time, the arbiters of that Empire. The fascinating story of this Peshwa's life had also a romantic touch in the episode of his relations with Mastani, the alluring daughter of Raja Chhatrasal of Bundelkhand.

The story of the rise of this romantic Peshwa and his achievements have been dealt with in great detail by several scholars. While I have liberally drawn on the researches made on this subject by the eminent historians like Grant Duff, Jadunath Sarkar, Kincaid, Rajwade, Potdar, Parasnis, Sardesai, Surendranath Sen, Dr. Dighe and others, I have tried to emphasise the historic role of Baji Rao I as the protector of King Shahu's title to the throne, as the military genius who was responsible for the establishment of Maratha power in the Deccan, in Malwa, in Gujarat, in Central India and beyond, as the redeemer of the Konkan from the Sidis of Janjira, and as the liberator of the island of Salsette and Bassein from the Portuguese.

I am grateful to Mr. K. M. Panikkar under whom I had the privilege to work for some time, for his Introduction to this Book.

C. K. SRINIVASAN

Introduction

BY K. M. PANIKKAR

BAJI RAO, the great Peshwa, was without doubt the most outstanding statesman and general that India produced in the 18th century. If Shivaji was the founder of the Maratha State Baji Rao could claim that he was the one who saved it from disruption and tranformed what was a national state into an empire. He was invested with power when he was just twenty ; at a time when the wounds of the prolonged civil war were still open and might have again become dangerous, when the rivalry between Satara and Kolhapur had not been finally settled for succession to the state, and when the Sidis of Janjira were still in occupation of some of the homelands of the Maratha people. When Baji Rao died at the age of forty after a bare twenty years of rule he had not only consolidated the authority of his king in the Maratha country, eliminated the disruptive elements in the state, but also humbled the pride of the Nizam whose ambitions he foiled and whom he defeated in open battles, effectively occupied Gujarat, Malwa and Bundelkhand thus carrying the Maratha flag to the outskirts of Delhi itself, conquered Salsette from the Portuguese and thus left to his successor a mighty and extensive empire such as no Hindu monarch had ever ruled after the hey-day of

the Gupta Emperors. To the British historians and following them to the textbook writers of India, 18th century is no more than a period of anarchy—a period of gestation for the glorious era of British rule. But the fact is far otherwise. Success cannot cast a glow backwards though historians with hindsight often tend to emphasise the beginning of the power which ultimately asserted itself and tend to forget the actual situation of the period.

During the second decade of the 18th century what dominated the political situation in India was still the Mughal Empire in Delhi, though it was fast descending through corruption, degeneracy and the struggles of court factions for power into a state bordering on anarchy. And yet no one had dared to challenge its right or to raise the standard of rebellion. Even the Maratha *Chhatrapati*, Shahu, the grandson of Shivaji, was content to accept the legitimacy of the *Padishah* of Delhi. Baji Rao was the first man to see the possibilities of succeeding to the Grand Mughal's estate and building up a Maratha Empire in Hindustan.

He fashioned two powerful instruments for the purpose: the Maratha cavalry and the conception of a *Hindu Pad Padshahi*. The army that Shivaji had raised and perfected had in the years that followed ceased to be the national arm of Maratha renaissance. It was broken up into petty instruments of civil war, for pushing rival claims and for marauding the country side. Gradually Baji Rao, after he had established the sole authority of his master by reducing the pretensions of the Kolhapur claimant, and breaking the overgrown power of feudal nobles like Shripat Rao Pratinidhi and the Dhabades, built up a national army under leaders like Ranoji Sindia, Malhar Rao Holkar, Anand Rao Pawar, all raised up from the ranks, and functioning as commanders of a centrally controlled force. If the army was the instrument, the dream of the re-establishment of Hindu sovereignty was the ideology. With Baji Rao, as with Shivaji before him, this was no political claptrap. In his dealings with the rulers of Rajasthan and in his support to

Chhatrasal in Bundelkhand, Baji Rao showed that he was genuinely attached to the doctrine of a *Hindu Pad Padshahi*. That the Marathas in the latter period of their authority in upper India forgot this doctrine is no doubt true, but that should not lead us to underestimate its importance during the first period of Maratha advance to the north or Baji Rao's own devotion to that ideal. That Sawai Jai Singh, one of the shrewdest men of his time, administrator, statesman, astronomer and town planner, and one of the greatest dignitaries of the Mughal court should have been convinced of Baji Rao's championship of Hindu *Dharma* should be ample proof of both its genuineness and of its appeal at the time to the Hindu populace of North India.

Closely related to this feeling of being the champion of Hindu *Dharma* was the desire of Baji Rao to re-establish Hindu control over the sacred places in the Gangetic valley. To the Chitpavan Brahman, the fact that the great Hindu places of pilgrimage, Benares and Prayag, were under Muslim occupation was a matter of deep sorrow. His father had bequeathed him as a solemn duty the work of "regenerating Hindu religion and the sacred places of Hindu religion like Benares." How deeply Baji Rao felt this humiliation of the holy places of the Hindus being under Muslim occupation may be seen from the extraordinary arrangements made for the pilgrimage of his mother to Benares. It was more like a triumphal procession, and the widow of Balaji Viswanath was waited upon and treated with almost royal honour even by Muslim Viceroys like Muhammad Khan Bangash.

Baji Rao undoubtedly fulfilled the promise he made to Shahu that he would establish Maratha authority in Hindustan. The empire he built up endured for over 70 years and Maratha influence in Hindustan remained a major factor till the vestiges of that empire were swept away in 1947 when the states of the great Maratha Princes were merged in the Indian Union. Though his success was great and in a large measure enduring, it will always remain a source of controversy whether Baji Rao, in taking the crucial deci-

sion of crossing the Narmada and moving north without ensuring his base, did not himself create conditions which led to the downfall of the Maratha Empire. Shivaji had clearly recognised that the safety of the Maratha State lay in strengthening its southern base. That was of course when there was the danger of an attack of overwhelming strength from the north. While it is true that no one could have foreseen any danger to the Maratha homelands developing from the south—from the Mysore tablelands, as it did actually with Wellesley's conquest of Mysore—the danger of permitting a consolidation of Nizam-ul-Mulk's authority in the Deccan should have been obvious to any one. In fact this was pointed out emphatically by Shripat Rao Pratinidhi—an experienced senior member of the Council at the historic meeting which discussed the policy of northern advance. According to well attested authorities Shripat Rao declared in Shahu's own presence that Baji Rao's policy of striking north, leaving so powerful and astute an enemy as Nizam-ul-Mulk on the flank, was dangerous to the security of the state. It was in reply to this very wise observation of the Pratinidhi that Baji Rao made his famous speech : " Strike, and strike at the trunk and the branches will fall by themselves." Shripat Rao could equally have retorted that the tree that shoots up without striking deep roots cannot resist a storm.

The results of Baji Rao's policy were indeed spectacular. The Maratha forces held Hindustan in fee and planted the Maratha banner on the walls of Attock within the course of the next quarter of a century. But before the century was out the neglected Nizam provided the base for a powerful British force, while from the territories of Mysore the homelands of the Maratha State were themselves threatened. Why even after his spectacular successes, when he had two chances of decisively liquidating the Nizam's power in the Deccan, Baji Rao was content to tread on the serpent and not destroy him, remains one of the great mysteries of Indian History. Perhaps the reason for this

unaccountable generosity is to be found in the character of Shahu, who had a strange respect for the Mughal throne and its claims. More than once the *Chhatrapati* intervened and pleaded for moderation in dealing with the Nizam. But whatever the reason, there is no doubt that the Peshwa could have pushed his advantage after the victory at Palkhed, and perhaps with greater success after the battle of Bhopal. By a false sense of generosity both these opportunities were wasted, leaving on the flank of the Maratha homeland a Muslim state which though weak in itself was enabled later to provide a base for British action against the Marathas. Undoubtedly the wiser policy, which would have given greater stability to the Maratha State and which might even have prevented the British conquest of India, would have been for the Peshwa to liquidate the Mughal power in the Deccan, to strengthen Maratha authority in the south and then expand to the north, across the Naramada, in fact the policy of the Deccan party which was ably advocated by Shripat Rao Pratinidhi.

There is one aspect of Baji Rao's life that has, on account of both its romance and its tragedy, attracted a great deal of attention : that is his relations with Mastani. Mastani was no ordinary dancing girl or courtesan whom the caprice of an autocrat had raised to a high position. The daughter of Chhatrasal, the Bundela King, by a Muslim mistress, she has been presented by her father to the Peshwa as a mark of his affection and gratitude. And Mastani herself was not only cultivated in arts, but high-spirited and courageous. The story of their love may be read in Mr. Srinivasan's narrative. What is significant is not the deep attachment of the Brahman Peshwa to the Muslim woman but the extraordinary fact of Brahman orthodoxy forcing the most powerful man in the empire to bend his knees and accept defeat. The refusal of the priests to do the necessary ceremonies in the Peshwa's household, so long as Mastani lived there, was the reply of Hindu orthodoxy to the challenge of the Peshwa. Baji Rao had in fact not to

go to Canossa, but to be carried there. Nothing demonstrates so clearly the power of organised Hinduism as much as this single fact.

Mastani deserves to be remembered along with Baji Rao not merely because of her devotion and faithfulness, but of her loyalty and that of her descendants. The Nawabs of Banda, the descendants of Baji Rao and Mastani, never forgot their origin and on the last occasion when the flag of the Peshwa flew over the battlefield of Kalpi in 1858, the Nawab of Banda was there alongside with the Rani of Jhansi.

The first half of the 18th century in India produced some remarkable men : Nizam-ul-Mulk, the founder of the Hyderabad State ; Maharaja Jai Singh, statesman, astronomer and town planner ; Chhatrasal, the liberator of the Bundelas ; Muhammad Khan Bangash, the Rohilla general ; not to speak of the brilliant galaxy of Maratha leaders like Ranoji Sindia, Malhar Rao Holkar and Pilaji Gaikwad. They were all men of achievement who have left their mark on history. But each one of them is not only eclipsed by the brilliance of Baji Rao's achievements but have their place in history mainly in relation to him. It is in their relations with Baji Rao either in opposition to him, as in the case of the Nizam or of Bangash, or in association with him as in the case of Jai Singh and Chhatrasal, that they achieve their importance in history.

Mr. C. K. Srinivasan whose earlier work on the *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic,* established his name as a competent worker in the field of historical research, has in this work produced a biography of great merit. He has not only drawn a clear picture of the complicated political conditions of the time but has woven his narrative with considerable skill around the personality of Baji Rao. Throughout the narrative Baji Rao's genius as an administrator, statesman and general stands out clear and sharp. Mr. Srinivasan deserves the congratulation of all serious students of Indian

History in having produced such a readable but at the same time accurate study of a great character and also illuminated a great period of Indian History.

I

The Historic Setting

INDIAN HISTORY boasts of a few epochs which are matchless both for the remarkable achievements of the men who played their part and their legacy to posterity. The great men of each age are those who most fully embody the spirit of their times. "The genuine statesman is incarnate History, its directedness expressed as individual will and its organic logic as character."[1] The grandeur of a nation is written "in the heroic deeds of the soldiers, the able administration of statesmen and in the achievement of the people in the intellectual and philosophical fields, in arts, in music, in every other science; in the possession of a common tradition and in the memory of sufferings endured and victories won and expressed in song and legend, in the dear names of great personalities and in the names also of sacred places wherein the national memory is enshrined." And among those people who fought to preserve their independence, the Marathas deserve special mention, for their soldiers, statesmen and saints understood the significance of freedom, and directed their endeavours first towards achieving it and later on towards preserving it. As one ponders

[1] Spengler : *Decline of the West*, Vol. II, p. 443

over the colourful history of the Maratha people, their sufferings and their sacrifices, the bold plans put forward by their men of destiny and executed with audacity against powerful and well-organized enemies, and the ability and skill with which they maintained the unity of a vast empire, one is convinced that their achievements in the civil and military fields constitute a most arresting chapter in India's national evolution.

Maharashtra literally means a great country. According to Dr. Bhandarkar, the name is derived from the early Aryan colonists called the *Rashtikas* or the *Rashtrikas* and who later on took the title of *Maha Rashtrikas* when they settled down. The earliest reference to the word 'Maharashtra' is in Varahamihira's astronomy written in 505 A.D. Pulakesin's inscription of 611 A.D. in Badami mentions the name of the southern country as Maharashtra. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller who visited Maharashtra at about 647 A.D. has given an excellent description of the country and the people. "The Maharashtra country was 6000 *li* in circuit and its capital, which had a large river on its west side, was above thirty *li* in circuit. The inhabitants were proud, spirited and war-like, grateful for favours and revengeful for wrongs, self-sacrificing towards suppliants in distress and sanguinary to death with any who treated them insultingly. Their martial heroes who led the vanguard of the army in battle went into battle intoxicated and their war elephants were also made drunk before an engagement. Relying on the strength of his heroes and elephants the king treated the neighbouring countries with contempt. He was a Kshatriya by birth and his name was *Pu-lo-Ki-She*. The benevolent sway of this king reached far and wide, and his vassals served him with perfect loyalty. The great King Siladitya at this time was invading east and west and countries far and near were giving in allegiance to him, but *Mo-ha-la-cha* refused to become subject to him."[2]

[2] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *Foreign Notices of India*, pp. 105–06

Mythology claims that the first Aryan to cross the Vindhyas was the sage Agastya who it seems went to Vidharba and married Lopamudra, the Princess of Berar. When the Aryans migrated south between the years 800 B.C. and 250 B.C. they found a highly developed society represented by the Nagas and the Dravidians. The Aryans freely mixed and intermarried with the people of the Deccan and a neo-Aryan society grew. Maharashtra thus became an area where the Sanskritic northern traits and the Dravidian southern traits met and were mutually influenced. Geographically and politically, therefore, Maharashtra is an area of cultural contacts and this fact has influenced the social institutions of Maharashtra.[3]

For the growth of such a powerful people there were many contributory factors. The first was geographical. Maharashtra occupies that portion which forms roughly a triangle, of which one side is the coast from Daman to Karwar and the second runs from the sea coast eastwards to the neighbourhood of Nagpur, while the third side stretches from Nagpur to Karwar. The Konkan to the west of the Ghats and the Desh to its eastern slopes and side, are the two main divisions of this country; the most arresting physical feature is the range of Western Ghats (Sahyadri) which forms a lofty and broad ridge in the centre. This last region known as *Maval* or the *Ghat Matha* is studded over with many natural rock fortresses which are rendered inaccessible by dense forests and steep mountains. Its people are naturally hardy and self-reliant, subsisting on a meagre return from the soil and possessed of great strength of mind and love of independence. From a " military point of view there is probably no stronger country in the world."[4] The Konkan with its warm and moist climate is the narrow coastal strip between the Sahyadri mountains and the sea and has an average annual rainfall of 80 inches. During

[3] Iravati Karve: *Kinship Organisation in India*, p. 155

[4] Grant Duff: *History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 6

the rainy season its innumerable streams look like swollen rivers and the rugged and rocky nature of the soil dominated by the tremendous scarp of the Sahyadri fretted into wild canyons renders communication between the different parts in the Konkan difficult. The Desh is a vast tract from the Sahyadri to the Wainganga river. The land beyond the rain-shadow region of the Ghats gets more rainfall and the soil is more fertile. It is along the main river valleys that the Maharashtrians spread and built their civilization. First is the Purna-Tapti valley comprising the area of Khandesh and the Berar. The next is the Godavari valley and lastly is the area covered by the Krishna and its tributary the Bhima. The Krishna is a most important river of Maharashtra. Rising from the hills of Mahabaleshwar it runs through the Satara District and going through Sangli and Miraj it enters the Bijapur District where it reaches the southern limit of the Marathi speaking tract. The major portion of the Desh is spread over the area covered by the valleys of these two rivers. Pandharpur, the great seat of God Vithoba, is on the confluence of the Bhima and the Chandrabhaga. Wai, the most important centre of learning is along the banks of the Krishna. It is in this area that Shivaji and his Guru Ramdas began their activities, the former laying the foundations of the Maratha Kingdom and the latter giving the moral, religious and philosophical lead to the people to sustain and expand it.

The second factor was the renaissance which took place in the religious and social life of the people in the century preceding Shivaji's emergence which completely changed their outlook, and fitted them for raising a nation on a religious basis. "This religious revival was not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest against forms and ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth and ethical in its preference of a pure heart, and of the law of love to all other acquired merits and good works. This religious revival was the work also of the

people, of the masses, and not of the classes."[5] All the religious teachers taught the Marathas to guard their Dharma and fight for their independence. They instilled into their minds the essential equality of mankind and urged for its unification. Ramdas, Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram carried on their tirade against the monopoly of the Brahman class and protested strongly against its exclusive domination. They rebelled against the artificial restrictions and broke the privileges of the Brahmans and declared that the need of the time was unity and not caste exclusiveness which prevented the same. The results of this religious revival are indicated by Ranade in these words : " It raised the shudra classes to a position of spiritual power and social importance, almost equal to that of the Brahmans. It gave sanctity to the family relations, and raised the status of women; it made the nation more humane, at the same time more prone to hold together by mutual toleration. It suggested and partly carried out a plan of reconciliation with the Muhammadans. It subordinated the importance of rites and ceremonies and of pilgrimages and fasts and of learning and contemplation, to the higher excellence of worship by means of love and faith. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It tended in all these ways to raise the nation to a higher level of capacity both of thought and action and prepare it in a way no other nation in India was prepared, to take the lead in re-establishing a united native power in the place of foreign domination."[6]

The third factor was the long discipline in arms which the Marathas had received from the Deccan rulers. There is inscriptional evidence to show that the Marathas had received considerable specialised training in the military and administrative spheres under the rulers of the Deccan, Mysore and Karnatak for several generations, and it was this training and the religious revival in Maharashtra that enabled Shivaji to gather the scattered elements of a mighty

[5] Ranade : *Rise of the Maratha Power*, p. 10
[6] Ranade : *op. cit.*, p. 172

race and present to posterity the pattern of a nation at once brave, independent and zealous of its own rights and duties. This training which the Marathas had is traceable in inscriptions from the time of the Yadavas.[7] Among the most important Maratha families which took service under the rulers of the Deccan as soldiers in cavalry units or as officials and accountants in the civil administration were the Ravutas, the Ranes and the Mahapatras. According to Dr. Saletore the name Ravuta stood for a Maratha horseman[8] and various inscriptions speak of their military exploits. During the time of the Hoysala ruler Vira Ballala (1173—1220) Bittiga Ravuta, defeated in 1179 A.D. the troops of elephants of the enemy, the Kalacurya King Sankama, and died fighting for his royal master.[9] Another soldier called Jayya Ravuta met with the same end while fighting Bokeya Boppa Nayak, an official under the Yadava King Singana, in 1224 A.D.[10] For the exhibition of valour on the battlefield, the Karnataka monarchs conferred titles on these noblemen; for instance, in 1256 A.D. Senapati Attala Deva received the title of Sarvadhikari Ravuta from the Hoysala King Someswara Deva.

The Ranes who received administrative training are mentioned in the reign of the Yadava monarch Rama Chandra Deva.[11] One Boluji Dev Rane of Saluve was appointed governor over the Nagarakhandanad in 1275 A.D.[12] The

7 C. K. Srinivasan: *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic*, p. 343

8 Ferishta says that the haughty regent Kumal Khan, desirous of plotting against his royal master, " raised a vast number of G'hora Rawoot, till at length having an army of twenty thousand devoted to his service, he called together his creatures on the 1st of Sufiur in the year 917." Briggs commenting on the words 'G'hora Ravut' says: "Maratha horsemen who received their pay annually and were bound to appear fully equipped for service whenever called on. They provided their own horses, accoutrements and arms and maintained themselves." Ferishta: *The Rise of the Mohammadan Power in India*, Vol. III, p. 37

9 *Mysore Archaelogical Report for 1931*, p. 100

10 *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VII, SK. 248, p. 141

11 C. K. Srinivasan, *op. cit.*, p. 344

12 *Mysore Archaelogical Report for 1911*, p. 41

Hoysalas also encouraged the Ranes and many of them were appointed to look after district administration.[13] The Vijayanagar rulers understood the capacity of the Marathas and entertained them in their service on an extensive scale. A most prominent Ravuta official under Immadi Narsinga Raya in 1498 A.D. was Ramaiyappa Ravuta about whom many inscriptions speak.[14] It may be said that it was during the 16th century that the influence of the Marathas in the administration of the Vijayanagar Kingdom became pronounced. Krishna Deva Raya appointed Haridasa Ravuta in 1519 as commandant of the hill fortress of Toragale, while his brother Murari Ravuta was given command of the fort of Tormale.[15] During the reign of Achuta Deva Raya, the most favoured Maratha official was Somasila Deva Ravuta Raya, who possessed Basavapattana under him, who received as a gift from the Emperor the Terkanambi sime and who employed agents to look after his affairs.[16]

It was under the Bahmani rulers that the innate genius of the Marathas both for administration and for fighting was adequately recognised and they were employed in considerable numbers in the civil and military services under Ahmednagar and Bijapur. Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur (1535–57) showed a great preference for the natives of Maharashtra since he found in them officers of ability and talent. Their power and political status were definitely enhanced when Marathi was substituted for Persian as the language of accounts in the Bijapur *sarkar*. The foreign element in the army was diminished and increased employment was given to Maratha soldiers. This example was soon followed by Ahmednagar as well as by Golkonda. In this way not a few of the Maratha leaders acquired distinction and rose to high office of trust.

The gradual penetration of Mughal arms into the Deccan

[13] *Epigraphia Carnatica* II, Hr. 87, pp. 113–4
[14] *Mysore Archaelogical Report for 1913*, p. 47
[15] *Epigraphia Carnatica* XI, Dg. 146, p. 199
[16] *Mysore Archaelogical Report for 1912–13*, p. 48

which had begun in the reign of Akbar and carried on by his successors gave an opportunity for the Marathas to help the southern Sultans in their endeavours to stem the tide of northern expansion. By the close of Aurangzib's second tenure of the Viceroyalty of the Deccan (1658 A.D.), three out of the five Sultanates had been fully incorporated into the Imperial Dominions; the remaining two, Bijapur and Golkonda, were greatly weakened. Their Sultans, although aware of the doom which awaited them, were not prepared to surrender their sovereignty without a struggle. In the wars that ensued, the Maratha leaders distinguished themselves by their bravery, Shahji Bhonsle in particular playing a cospicuous part first as the champion of Ahmadnagar, and, after its fall, in the service of Bijapur. Again he showed his genius for organization when his services were utilised in the campaigns conducted by the Bijapur generals against the Carnatic States. The declining Vijayanagar Empire invited the attention of Bijapur and Golkonda and they carried on their policy of southern expansion with increasing vigour.

It may be of interest to know how far Bijapur and Golkonda had extended their dominions into the territories of Vijayanagar. The two Sultanates came to an understanding in 1573 A.D. as to the nature of their encroachments in the Vijayanagar Empire, and agreed to respect each other's acquisitions. "Bijapur was allowed for its share of expansion the plateau region covering the greater half of the Mysore plateau on the eastern side and leading into the middle country of Tamil India, the South Arcot District of today. Golkonda had for its share the whole of the Karnatak below the Ghats, leading southwards towards Madras and terminating with perhaps the borders of the Chinglepet District."[17] When Sriranga I ascended the throne in 1572 A.D., he had to face these difficulties. Many battles were fought to keep the power of Golkonda within the limits. In

[17] S. K. Ayyangar · "The Rise of the Maratha Power," *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. IX, pp. 176–7

one of his wars "he was defeated and taken prisoner and the Musulmans conquered the whole country north of Penugonda and ruled it"[18] (1576).

But his release was obtained through the endeavours of a loyal chieftain of the Empire. The Emperor had also to face the incursions of the Bijapur army. After conquering Adoni and extending her dominions along the west coast region, Bijapur in 1577 A.D. made an attempt on Penugonda itself; but the Musulmans were defeated and driven back by the gallant Jagadeva Raya, the Emperor's son-in-law.[19] In recognition of his meritorious services Jagadeva Raya was rewarded with a grant of territory which extended across Mysore from Baramahal on the east, to the base of the Western Ghats in the west. He made Chennapatna in the Bangalore district his headquarters. Thus though the attempts of the Sultanates were thwarted at the beginning, yet they despaired not of success.

During the reign of Venkatapathi I (1586—1614) although there were some territorial losses, the administration of the Empire was efficiently carried on with the assistance of the various feudatories and the Nayak rulers of the south. But in course of time, the successful operation of the Golkonda Sultan led to the appropriation of the north-eastern corner of the Vijayanagar territory, while the Seringapatam viceroyalty was liquidated and a new family of rulers, the Vodeyars of Mysore, contrived to set themselves up with the countenance of the Emperor himself. Slowly but steadily the Mysore King, Chamaraja Vodeyar, absorbed the Chennapatnam viceroyalty by 1630 A.D. The rulers of Vellore and Gingee were subordinated to the Emperor. The recalcitrant Madura Nayak, Muthu Virappa, was brought to a sense of loyalty to the Empire by Venkatapathi Raya who himself led an expedition against

18 S. K. Ayyangar: *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, p. 232

19 Rice: *Mysore Gazetteer*, Vol. I, p. 356. S. K. Ayyangar doubts the relationship between the Vijayanagar Emperor and Jagadeva Raya. *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, p. 230

him. In this the Raya was assisted by the loyal Nayak of Tanjore. The Nayaks of Madura seem to have forgiven neither the Emperor for this assertion of his supremacy, nor the Nayaks of Tanjore for the loyal support that made this assertion possible.

Soon after the death of Venkatapathi I in 1614 A.D., a civil war broke between the loyal adherents of the legal claimant to the throne headed by Yachama Nayaka, and the supporters of the putative son of Venkata, under the leadership of Jagga Raya. After murdering the legitimate king and finding himself still unable to maintain his position near the capital, Jagga sought and found warm support from the disobedient Nayaks of Madura and Gingee. Once more the Tanjore Nayak Raghunatha, stood as the great supporter of the cause of the loyalist party of the Empire, and according to the *Sahityaratnakara* and *Raghunathabhyudayam*, Tanjore won a crushing victory over Jagga Raya and his associates, the Nayaks of Madura and Gingee near the Grand Anicut. In the battle of Topur in 1616 A.D., the allies were defeated and the young Prince Rama was crowned king at Kumbakonam by Raghunatha.[20]

The successors of Venkatapathi I were Sriranga II (1614-1616), Rama (1616-1630) and Venkata II (1630-1642). These rulers refrained from interfering with the attempts at independence made by their feudatories. Their weakness afforded sufficient scope for Bijapur and Golkonda to advance on the Vijayanagar territory and annex the undefended portions. The conclusion of a pact between Emperor Shah Jahan and the two Sultanates in 1636 relieved the latter from the crushing weight of imperial aggression and enabled them to devote their attention for the conquest of the Carnatic. The mutual quarrels that arose among the great feudatories of the Vijayanagar Empire facilitated the Sultans to extend their respective frontiers. Chamaraja Vodeyar annexed the Chennapatna viceroyalty without the

[20] S. K. Ayyangar: *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, pp. 274, 290

Baramahal, and was not able to conquer the territory of Ikkeri on the northern side. His successor Kanthiravanarasa in order to achieve this brought about a Bijapur invasion as a result of which he himself suffered. Kanthirava also set up against Virabhadra Nayak, the ruler of Ikkeri, the surrounding Polegars especially Kenga Hanuma of Basavapattana. Virabhadra was able to quell the rebellion and dispossess Kenga Hanuma of his territory. Thereupon Kenga Hanuma went over to the Bijapur court to solicit the help of the Padshah, where already another Polegar, Channayya of Nagamangala who was deprived of his fief by Chamaraja Vodeyar, had come with a similar request. The Bijapur Sultan consented to intervene. An army under Randulla Khan with Shahji second in command was sent for the purpose of reinstating Kenga Hanuma. After making Kenga Hanuma, ruler of Basavapattana, the Bijapur army marched on and took possession of the three provinces of Ikkeri, Sira and Bangalore. Afterwards Randulla Khan laid siege to Mysore and Seringapatam simultaneously and towards the end, Kanthirava agreed to surrender to Bijapur all the country to the north of the Cauvery, including Sira and Bangalore. Thus while Mysore and Ikkeri shared the attacks of Bijapur, the brunt of the Golkonda aggression fell on the Vijayanagar Empire proper, first at Penugonda, and subsequently at Chandragiri, and lastly at Vellore. It was this double pressure both on the western and eastern frontiers of the Empire " that occupied all the available time and energy of the imperial headquarters and left the larger viceroyalties without much fear of active intervention on the imperial side ".

When Sriranga III ascended the throne in 1642 A.D. he had to face on the one side the aggressive aspirations of Bijapur and Golkonda, and on the other the threatening attitude of his southern feudatories who wanted to establish their independence. While the Nayak of Tanjore remained always loyal to the Emperor, the Nayaks of Madura and Gingee became disobedient and openly rebelled against

him. The conduct of Tirumala Nayakan of Madura at a time when the Empire was struggling for existence, driven from one capital to another by Muhammadan fury, was intended to foil the attempts of Sriranga III to "metamorphose the rickety empire into an actively functioning body". The Madura Nayak strove to establish his independence, in which endeavour he only followed the example set by Raja Vodeyar of Mysore. Not content with the assertion of his independence, he made vigorous attempts to bring about the alliance of Gingee, Tanjore and Madura in order to oppose the Emperor. But this plot was betrayed to Sriranga III by the loyal Nayak ruler of Tanjore. Tirumala, in order to frustrate the Emperor's attempt to curb his insubordination, courted the assistance of Golkonda and persuaded the Sultan to attack Vellore. The Emperor who had to face these difficulties failed to assert his supremacy in the conflict.

In the conquering expeditions of Bijapur in the south, the services of Shahji and the Marathas under him became indispensable. Shahji was appointed governor of the conquered parts in the Carnatic. He consolidated these areas, and by 1662 A.D. extended his sway as far south as Tanjore. He was the most potent figure in the Carnatic during this time. The *Shiva Bharat* gives an account of his conquests in these words: "Shahji went on the southern invasion with Ranadhoola Khan sent by Adil Shah; and he conquered the Raja of Bednur; the powerful Virabhadra Nayak; the well-known Kenga Nayaka of Basavapattana; Jagadeva Raya of Kaveripattanam; Kanthirava, the cruel Lord of Srirangapatam, the brave Vijayaraghava of Tanjore, the noble Venkata Nayak of Gingee, the wise Sriranga Raja of Vijayanagar, the proud lord of Madura named Tirumala Naik, the formidable king of Pilugonda, named Venkata, and the famous Tammagauda, Lord of Hamsakuta."[21]

Such were the circumstances that helped the rise of the

21 Patwardhan and Rawlinson: *A Source Book of Maratha History*, p. 12

Marathas and more particularly of Shahji. The sleepless aggressions of the Mughals for the purpose of reducing the kingdoms of Ahamadnagar, Bijapur and Golkonda on the one hand, and the slow disintegration of the Vijayanagar Empire on the other gave much scope for the Marathas to show their skill and organize themselves efficiently. Already they had had enough experience in the administrative and military departments while serving the Bahmani Sultanate. Thus united into a powerful nation by these forces they were eminently fitted to rule the land when their leader Shahji was appointed the supreme Governor of the Bijapur dominions in the south. Shahji made Bangalore his place of residence, but later on spent his time at Balapur and Kolar. " It was at this time that a swarm of Maratha Brahmins was first introduced into the south for the purpose of establishing under the direction of Shahji, a new system of revenue administration ; and of suppressing not only the universal anarchy which then prevailed, but with it most of the traces of the former order of things. Among other innovations the offices and Maratha names of Deshpande, Deshmuk, Kulkarni together with the Persian designations of Kunungo, Serishtadar and numberless other novelties, were then introduced."[22]

The ground was thus prepared partly by nature, partly by the ancient history of the country, partly by the religious revival, but chiefly by the long discipline in arms which the Marathas had undergone.[23] With the lapse of time the Marathas came to occupy very important places under rulers who represented the successive dynasties that governed the Carnatic. The Maratha power which subsequently came to be established in the 17th century was but " the inevitable culmination of the accumulated political and military wisdom which the Marathas had for five centuries, gathered under the Hindu rulers of Karnataka and to some extent

[22] Wilks : *History of Mysore*, Vol. I, p. 44
[23] Ranade : *op. cit.*, p. 38

also under the Sultans of the Deccan, and which they turned into good account only in the first half of the seventeenth century when they felt themselves confident and strong enough to stand forth as the protectors of the Hindu people."[24]

[24] *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1938, pp. 85–9

2

The Rise of The Romantic Peshwa

THE AGE OF the Peshwas was an age of splendour and magnificence, of conquest, and expansion of the Maratha rule far and wide. They took up as their ideal Shivaji's conception of a *Hindu Pad Padshahi*, and exerted their energy to achieve it. In fact they succeeded to a great degree and in that attempt they humiliated the Nizam, threatened the very existence of the Mughal Emperor by marching into his capital, Delhi, and consolidated the conquered parts on an efficient administrative basis with the Peshwa as the chief executive. Indeed they gave a new orientation to their policy which ultimately led to the decline of the King's authority and to the increase of the influence and majesty of the Peshwas. Maharashtra was very fortunate to possess during the days of anarchy and confusion a regular line of able men who not only effectively prevented internal sedition but, through the strength and might of their arms, subdued their enemies and enhanced the power and authority of the Marathas. The policy of territorial expansion adumbrated by Balaji Vishwanath was taken up by his more able successor Baji Rao, who "had the head to plan and the hand to execute". Of the first three Peshwas it is Baji Rao's name that towers

above all others, for it was during the life-time of this romantic Peshwa that some of the significant successes of the Marathas were achieved.

The rise of the Peshwas to power is a thrilling story. There are very few instances in the history of India where successive members of the same family dominated the political scene as the Peshwas did. This they did, not by disputing the right of the ruling monarch, not by fomenting trouble for the *Chhatrapati*, but by rendering to him all the obedience and courtesy he was entitled to and at the same time standing out as the most dominant and determined leaders of the people of Maharashtra in their attempt to expand and enrich an empire and defend it against foreign attacks. Several circumstances facilitated this curious phenomenon. Emperor Aurangzib could not completely crush the Marathas even though he captured their King Sambhaji (1689) and executed him and subsequently tried every means in his power to root out the Maratha power. When the aged Emperor died in February 1707, the problem of the Marathas was as difficult as when he set his face first to tackle and muster the resources of the empire in that direction. Shahu, the son of Sambhaji who had been brought up in the Mughal court was soon released with the hope that his presence in Maharashtra would add further to the troubles of the Marathas and hasten their disintegration. But this did not happen. On the contrary, the forces of integration became more dominant and in fact it was during Shahu's time that the Marathas marched from victory to victory.

When Sambhaji was executed the direction of Maratha affairs was in the hands of his half-brother Rajaram. True to his promise to be the servant of Prince Shahu, he carried on as regent through this dark and difficult period of Maratha history and strove hard to protect the unity of Maharashtra. His epic struggle from the fortress of Gingee against which the Mughal army under Zulfiqar Khan battled in vain for seven long years, his escape and return to Maha-

rashtra where he again raised the banner of revolt and the tenacity with which he kept up the struggle gave fresh hope and enthusiasm for his people. " Through an endless darkness " Rajaram " kept alive the flickering flame of his country's independence." When he died in 1700 his widow Tarabai, the strong and self-willed and masculine daughter of Hambir Rao Mohite, declared herself regent for her infant son Shivaji. She announced that her son was the same Shivaji of whom the prophecy ran that he will conquer all India from Attock to Rameshwar. Tarabai appointed Parashuram Trimbak to the office of the Pratinidhi while the post of Pant Sachiv was given to Shankar Narayan Gandekar. Her vigour and tenacity of purpose silenced all opposition to her plan. Early in 1701 her son Shivaji was crowned king. Simultaneously the co-wife Rajasbai and her son Sambhaji were thrown into prison by Tarabai.

Taking advantage of the situation the Mughal Emperor Aurangzib was able to reduce one fortress after another of the Marathas. Thus by 1704 Parli, Panhala, Rajgad and Torna had fallen into the Mughal hands. However, the Emperor realised that with all these successes the conquest of the Maratha people was far from complete. The leadership and enterprise of Tarabai built up a grand opposition to Mughal expansion in Maharashtra. She inspired her countrymen to fight the enemy and save the motherland. She planned campaigns and organized a great counter-offensive against the Emperor. Soon in 1705 the Maratha armies were able to assert themselves. The activities of Ramachandra Bavdekar, Dhanaji Jadhav, and Parashuram Trimbak resulted in the reconquest of all Maratha strongholds from the Mughal hands. The position of the imperial army became very difficult. The Emperor tried his utmost to pull out and reach Ahmadnagar safely. The Maratha contingent under Dhanaji Jadhav harassed the retreating Mughal army and if Dhanaji had " pressed his success he could have captured Aurangzib himself." For over twenty long years the Emperor had tried, regardless of the great

strain on the resources of the Empire, to subjugate the south. When in January 1707 he reached the walls of the fort built by Ahmad Nizam Shah for refuge the aged Emperor realised how foolishly he had pursued a dream for so long. With the death of Aurangzib on the 20th February, 1707, the Islamic State he strove to achieve was also buried.

The passing away of the Emperor was the signal for his sons to wage the war of succession. Azam Shah, the Emperor's son, was advised by Zulfiqar Khan to release Shahu. And into the troubled state of affairs in Maharashtra, the Mughals threw an apple of discord by releasing Shahu the legitimate king and the eldest grandson of Shivaji. Shahu agreed to rule as a feudatory of Azam Shah who granted him the *sardeshmukhi* and the *chauth* over the six Deccan subahs of Khandesh, Berar, Aurangabad, Bidar, Hyderabad and Bijapur and the Governorship of Gondwana, Gujarat and Tanjore during good behaviour.

Shahu's return to Maharashtra was not greeted with rejoicings and he had to establish his title to the throne. Indeed Tarabai declared that Shahu was an imposter. She called upon the Maratha nobles to swear on milk and boiled rice, fidelity to her son Shivaji. However, Shahu was able to win over some of Tarabai's followers. The redoubtable Dhanaji Jadhav and Mansingh More went over to him. Slowly Satara was captured and Parashuram Trimbak, the Pratinidhi was taken prisoner. Tarabai was greatly incensed over these successes of Shahu. She was furious over Dhanaji Jadhav's defection and the capture of Satara by Shahu. Even Ramachandra Bavdekar fell a victim to her wrath. She had him thrown into a dungeon.

Shahu was crowned King at Satara in January, 1708. Some of the leading statesmen like Ramachandra Bavdekar, Parashuram Trimbak, and Shankar Narayan joined Tarabai in the rival capital set up by her at Panhala twelve miles from Kolhapur. Angered by this defection King Shahu made Gadadhar Pralhad his Pratinidhi, Bahiro Pant

Pingle his Peshwa and Dhanaji Jadhav his Senapati. The years that followed witnessed a grim struggle for power. In 1712 a palace intrigue removed Tarabai from power and her co-wife Rajasbai claimed the throne for her son Sambhaji. In the words of Tarabai : "In the course of time we were compelled to undergo a sad experience. Rajasbai and her son Sambhaji managed through some of their agents to put us in confinement and inflict hardships upon us. Sambhaji was seated upon the throne." This great and gifted lady spent several years in prison, witnessed the national disaster of Panipat (1761) and died ten months after on the 9th December, 1761.

Shahu came to an arrangement with Rajasbai by which the kingdom was divided into two: that to the south of the river Krishna was given to Sambhaji, while that to the north of Krishna was taken over by Shahu. Shahu's domain was thus confined to a small area. Expansion in the south was barred by the presence of the other kingdom at Kolhapur. He had naturally to look to the north for further expansion. There was considerable anarchy in the Deccan. Its new viceroy, Chin Qilich Khan, who succeeded Daud Khan at Aurangabad in 1712 with the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk, proved a formidable rival to the claims of the Marathas and especially of Shahu. The Nizam threw in his lot with the Kolhapur party and supported the claims of Sambhaji. The great Dhanaji Jadhav who had been a pillar of strength to the Maratha King died in 1708. His son Chandrasen Jadhav who assumed his father's office of Senapati also went over to the Kolhapur side. Thus Shahu was in a great predicament. The man who saved Shahu from what might have been an irretrievable and hopeless situation was Balaji Vishwanath.

Balaji Vishwanath was a Chitpavan Brahman[1] whose an-

[1] A curious legend about this caste is referred to by Kincaid and Parasnis : "The story runs that Parashu Rama, the Brahman incarnation of God Vishnu, to avenge the murder of his father Jamadagni by the

cestors were the Deshmukhs of Shrivardhan near Bankot, under the control of the Sidi of Janjira. His early life is rather obscure. It appears that due to the Sidi's persecution Balaji had to leave the place of his nativity and find employment under the Satara court. Although it cannot be definitely established whether he served Shivaji, his name is mentioned during the time of Sambhaji and Rajaram. He served under Senapati Dhanaji Jadhav who utilised Balaji's talents in several arduous tasks. This naturally kindled the jealousy of Chandrasen, Dhanaji's son. Shortly after he became Senapati Chandrasen joined the Kolhapur party. There was no reliable soldier on whom Shahu could depend. It was then that Balaji Vishwanath offered his services to Shahu. Daily the King's admiration for Balaji grew. The latter enlisted new armies, quelled rebels and tried his utmost to make the position of Shahu strong and secure. But then came a great threat from Kanhoji Angre, the hereditary admiral of the Maratha fleet, against whom Shahu sent the Peshwa, Bahiro Pant Pingle. Kanhoji defeated the Peshwa and took him prisoner. Thereafter he openly

Kshatriya King Shahasrarjuna, cleared the earth twenty-one times of the Kshatriya clans. Thereafter he was so reeking with blood that no other Brahman would eat with him. He, therefore, went to the summit of the Sahyadris and stood gazing at the sea which then washed the foot of the mountains and pondered where he could find Brahmans who would dine with him. As he looked, he saw floating on the surface of the water the corpses of fourteen *mlechas* or barbarians. He dragged them ashore, built a great pyre and burnt them to ashes. From the ashes he created fourteen live Brahmans who had no scruples about eating with their creator. The meal over, the fourteen Brahmans begged Parashu Rama to give them a land wherein they might live. The hero drew the mighty bow given him by the God Shiva and shot an arrow into the Arabian Sea. He then commanded the sea to go back within its borders as far as the spot where the arrow had fallen. The ocean did so, thus leaving bare Konkan. This reclaimed tract Parashu Rama bestowed on the fourteen Brahmans. They went to dwell there and built themselves a town called *Chitpalan*, or the Town of the Burnt Heart, which in course of time became Chiplun. To themselves, they gave the name of *Chitpavans*, or Brahmans purified by the funeral pyre."

Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 201

declared he would march on Satara. In this desperate situation Shahu turned to his Pratinidhi, Gadadhar Pralhad for help but that officer could not do anything as according to him the "the army was not at his devotion." It was at this juncture that Shahu hit upon the idea of making Balaji his Peshwa as he was the one man who, Shahu thought could stem the great threat to the king's authority, restore order and strengthen his position. In the words of the Maratha chronicler, Shahu "sent for the eight Pradhans, communicated to them the accounts he had received and desired them to take the necessary measures for checking these depredations. They all remained silent. He then looked towards Balaji who got up and addressed the Raja, saying : ' If you will give me orders, through your good fortune they will be carried into effect. ' Upon this, the Raja, placed his hand on Balaji's head and desired him to take the troops. The Maharaja gave him the entire administration of affairs with the robes of Peshwaship. His fame and greatness were daily augmented ; the eight Pradhans of the State became subject to him. "

On the 17th November, 1713 Shahu appointed Balaji Vishwanath as his Peshwa. " Balaji's first concern was threefold, viz., to strengthen the cause of Shahu by bringing over to his side as many powerful Sardars and sympathisers of Sambhaji as possible, to create order and peace in the few territories which Shahu then owned, and to give useful employment to the various turbulent Maratha bands."[2] Very soon through diplomacy he won over Kanhoji Angre who not only released the ex-Peshwa Bahiro Pant Pingle, but transferred his allegiance from Kolhapur to Shahu. With the help of Kanhoji, the Peshwa was able to successfully eliminate the depredations of the Sidis of Janjira. Next Balaji turned his attention to suppress the freebooters and made an example of Damaji Thorat who was captured and put in prison and whose stronghold was razed to the ground. After restoring order at home he

[2] G. S. Sardesai : *The Main Currents of Maratha History*, p. 103

directed his energies to establish the sovereign rights of Shahu. The Raja was still the vassal of Delhi and it was Balaji Vishwanath's dream to recover for Shahu the sovereignty over all the territories over which Shivaji exercised authority. The time was most opportune. Disintegration had crept into the mighty Mughal Empire following the death of Aurangzib. The Mughal throne came to be occupied by a series of puppet rulers and during Faruksiyar's time all power was in the hands of the Syed brothers — Hussain Ali Khan and Abdullah Khan.

The Emperor in an attempt to release himself from the control of the Syed brothers appointed Hussain Ali Khan as the viceroy of the Deccan. Here Hussain Ali could make no headway against the depredations of the Marathas. In 1716 the veteran Maratha leader Khande Rao Dabhade severely defeated Hussain Ali Khan. Consequently the latter had to open negotiations with Shahu. This gave an opportunity for Balaji Vishwanath to pin down Shahu's claims for recognition by the Emperor in return for Maratha help. Hussain Ali Khan agreed that the Emperor should concede all the territories known as Shivaji's *swarajya* together with the forts therein and that the Maratha right to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the six provinces of the Deccan and Mysore, Trichinopoly and Tanjore, should be recognised. On his part Shahu consented to pay a million rupees as tribute in return for the *swarajya* and ten per cent of the annual income for the hereditary rights of *sardeshmukhi*, to maintain a body of 15,000 horses in the Emperor's service in return for the *chauth*[3] and to protect the country from depredation and

[3] According to Surendranath Sen the *chauth* of Shivaji's time was "a military contribution paid by the defenceless subjects of enemy kingdoms and territories, for the protection of their lives and property from the invading Maratha army, which held them completely at its mercy." However Shahu's acceptance of *chauth* and *sardesmukhi* on certain conditions became "for all practical purposes what Shivaji never agreed to be — namely a servant of the Emperor of Delhi. Thus both in its character

robbery. This treaty which was the result of Balaji Vishwanath's statecraft established the title of Shahu as the real ruler of Maharashtra as against the claims of his rival Sambhaji.

However, Emperor Faruksiyar was not willing to ratify the treaty entered into by Syed Hussain Ali Khan. On the contrary he summoned to his assistance Nizam-ul-Mulk, Sarbuland Khan and Ajit Singh in an attempt to get rid of the powerful Syed brother. Syed Abdullah who was watching the Emperor's activities immediately sent word to his brother Hussain Ali to hurry north. Assisted by 15,000 Maratha soldiers under Khande Rao Dabhade and accompanied by Balaji Vishwanath, Syed Hussain Ali marched on Delhi. After some fierce street fighting Syed Abdullah seized the Emperor, blinded him and threw him into a dungeon. The Peshwa remained in Delhi until the new Emperor ratified the treaty regarding the grant of *chauth, sardeshmukhi* and *swarajya* to Shahu. Balaji made a triumphal entry into Satara where Raja Shahu welcomed him and showered on him all honours. Not long after, on the 2nd April, 1720 Balaji Vishwanath suddenly passed away.

His great contribution was the restoration of peace and order in Maharashtra. He also strengthened the position of Shahu and in the process made the office of the Peshwa a most important one. He had "a calm, comprehensive and commanding intellect, an imaginative and aspiring disposition, an aptitude for ruling rude nature by moral force, a genius for diplomatic combination, a mastery of finance. His political destiny propelled him into affairs wherein his misery must have been acute. More than once he was threatened with death for which he doubtless prepared

and in the method of collection *chauth* became in Shahu's time a pension, exactly as the Portuguese regarded it in their relations with the Raja Chauthia of Ramnagar".

S. N. Sen : *The Military Systém of the Marathas*, pp. 32-6 (Orient Longmans, 1958)

himself with all the stoicism of his race when a ransom opportunely arrived. He wrung by a power of menace and argument from the Mughals a recognition of Maratha sovereignty. He carried victoriously all his diplomatic points. He sank into premature death with the consciousness that a Hindu Empire had been created over the ruins of Muhammadan power and that of this empire the hereditary chiefship had been secured for his family."[4]

Balaji Vishwanath had by his wife Radhabai Barve, two sons and two daughters. The two sons were Visaji alias Baji Rao and Antaji alias Chimnaji Appa. All the children were married before the death of Balaji Vishwanath. They were brought up under the watchful eye of their mother Radhabai, a most distinguished lady, who survived her husband for thirty three years and who guided her children in the path of righteousness. Beginning from Jija Bai, the ladies of Maharashtra had always exercised a great influence on the conduct of Maratha statesmen and the growth of the Maratha State.

Baji Rao, the eldest son was born on the 18th August, 1700. At a very early age he and his brother Chimnaji Appa came under the strict discipline of their father who imparted to them his political sagacity and military leadership. When the time came for these young men to pursue further the policy of territorial expansion and consolidation initiated by their father, they were well equipped both by experience and by training to assume the mantle of leadership. A most remarkable thing was the perfect understanding between the two brothers in the tasks they undertook and the method of achieving the results. The memory of his father's early triumphs over the Senapati, Chandrasen Jadhav and other minor rebels who disputed Shahu's authority filled Baji Rao with visions of similar and more glorious victories. Balaji's diplomatic victory over Syed Hussain Ali, the Mughal subahdar of the Deccan, which

[4] Sir Richard Temple: *Oriental Experience*, p. 389-90

secured for Shahu the right to claim *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in that territory was regarded by Baji Rao as indicative of the policy he should follow in the days to come. From a very early age Baji Rao dedicated himself to the military profession through which alone he thought he could serve the nation. He accompanied his father in many expeditions and shared his sufferings. He was with Balaji Vishwanath when the latter was chased from pillar to post by the infuriated Chandrasen, the Senapati in 1710. In 1711 he was imprisoned along with his father by the rebel Damaji Thorat and he had to subsist on parched rice and gur. And in all these expeditions he had carefully observed the passions that kindled men, their weakness and the means for winning their affection and leading them to victories. More than this through constant association with his father he had obtained a first-hand knowledge of the subtler details of home and foreign policies and by 1720 was the most eminently equipped leader in Shahu's Court to assume the Peshwaship.

Balaji Vishwanath had laid the broad bases on which his son Baji Rao had to build the Maratha Empire. Balaji had strengthened the cause of Shahu Maharaj by bringing over to his side many powerful feudatories of Maharashtra and giving them useful employment. He utilised his remarkable foresight and statesmanship to destroy the fissiparous tendencies of the Maratha nobles and unify the Hindu Empire which the great Shivaji set before himself and which was rudely shaken by the persistence and fury with which Emperor Aurangzib tried to smash the Hindu spirit. Throughout the length and breadth of Maharashtra he created a number of feudatories who not only resisted Mughal expansion but also acted as agents for collecting the King's dues. By the treaty with the Mughal Emperor the Peshwa made Shahu the lawful ruler of Maharashtra. "It was this legal status which Shahu had all along been trying to acquire since his release and which Balaji's supreme efforts succeeded at last in confirming. An orderly

government for Shahu's *swarajya* came to be immediately organized in place of what was till then a casual operation based upon force." However, during the short period of six years of his Peshwaship it was not possible for Balaji Vishwanath to bring all the opposing forces under the effective control of Shahu. What was lacking was a central authority to keep in check the multitudinous Maratha chieftains and harness their energies in a grand attempt to liquidate the constant threat of Mughal aggression and become the real protector of Hindu religion and culture. Although Maratha supremacy in the Deccan was recognised by the Mughal Emperor in 1719 still the astute Nizam-ul-Mulk, the stormy petrel of the Deccan would not accept this usurpation of his authority by the Marathas. A part of the Maratha dominion was in the powerful hands of the Sidi of Janjira whose dislodgement required all the might and fighting tactics of the Marathas. Moreover the Maratha claims on Malwa and Gujarat were never admitted by the Mughals. These parts could be conquered only if the Marathas were able to produce a proper leader backed by a powerful central authority to show them the means they had to adopt to achieve the purpose. A leader was required for creating unity through a central authority and for forging the martial instincts of the Maratha nation into a powerful weapon for conquest and consolidation. "The time had come to carry the war into the enemy's camp; the nation was ready for a soldier to lead its myriads of horsemen for conquest." The hero of the hour was Baji Rao, who was invested by Shahu Maharaj on the 17th April 1720 with the robes of first Minister at a place called Masur, 30 miles of Satara.

Maharaj Shahu's choice of Baji Rao as Peshwa was intentional. As such the selection of a twenty year old lad to the exalted post of Peshwaship was greatly resented by the older and tried veterans among the Maratha elite — Shripat Rao Pratinidhi, Anandrao Sumant, Naro Ram Mantri, Khanderao Dabhade, Kanhoji Bhonsle and others — who were aspiring for that post. Even during the lifetime of

Balaji Vishwanath a powerful body of Deshasth or Deccan Brahmins and Marathas familiarly known as the Deccan party and led by his formidable rival Shripat Rao, began to oppose the Peshwa in every endeavour of his. Shripat Rao continued his stubborn opposition during Baji Rao's Peshwaship also. He was sadly disappointed over the choice of Baji Rao as against the claims of other elder Maratha leaders. What is more, he could not reconcile himself to Baji Rao's policy of northern expansion. When the question of the future policy was considered in Shahu's presence Shripat Rao gave vent to his feelings and observed that it was childish of Baji Rao to carry arms into the north leaving the homeland weak and insecure and threatened in the rear by so powerful and astute an enemy as Nizam-ul-Mulk. He considered that the Marathas should organize their state, set their finances in order and keep a close liaison with their southern principality at Tanjore and Gingee. But Baji Rao presented a more colourful picture to Shahu. He asked Shahu to ponder over the weakness of the Mughal Empire and how opportune it was to establish Maratha rule in the rich provinces of Hindustan. It was Baji Rao's sheer personality that won the day. "The commanding stature which all but reached the low ceiling of the royal palace, the rich, clear voice, the bold, virile features, the dark imperious eyes that forced attention and above all, the rare falicity of diction that for centuries has been the peculiar gift of the Chitpavan Brahman, produced an irresistible effect. At the close of a lofty peroration, the minister fixed on Shahu his glowing gaze and said:

> Strike, strike at the trunk and the branches will fall of themselves. Listen but to my counsel and I shall plant the Maratha banner on the walls of Attock."[5]

Maharaj Shahu was overpowered by the eloquence and the bold and audacious policy enunciated by his redoubt-

[5] Kincaid and Parasnis: *op. cit.*, p. 224

able Peshwa. In an ecstasy he said : "By Heaven ! You shall plant it on the throne of the Almighty." Indeed Baji Rao accomplished what he said. The twenty years of his Peshwaship witnessed the march of the Maratha nation from one triumph to another. The defeat of Nizam-ul-Mulk at Palkhed established the supremacy of the Marathas in the Deccan. The lesser Maratha chiefs were subjugated one after the other and the destruction of the Senapati at Dabhai saw the culmination of this process. Maratha territories were recovered from the Sidis and the Portuguese, while in the north Baji Rao extended the Maratha power in Malwa, in Bundelkhand and in Gujarat and created consternation in the mind of the Mughal Emperor by marching into imperial Delhi.

Baji Rao, conscious of the great responsibilities attached to his high office and the grand efforts he had to make to achieve his objectives, set about selecting the men to carry out his bold plans. He had in his brother Chimnaji Appa a pillar of strength. Shahu also had great faith in him. Both the brothers with the support and the implicit confidence of their master, chalked out the plans to increase the revenue, raise the necessary troops and strengthen the royal authority by eliminating opposition. Ambajipant Purandare was appointed the Mutalik or Deputy Minister to assist Shahu whenever the Peshwa was not in Poona. He was singular for his steadfast devotion to duty and loyalty to the Peshwa.

The young Peshwa had also another strong supporter in Saint Brahmendraswami who was greatly revered by Shahu. Then there was the brave Pilaji Jadhav who gave his support to the Peshwa in his great campaigns and missions. Fatehsinh Bhosle, the favourite of Shahu, readily agreed to give his support to the Peshwa. And in course of time the Peshwa found in Udaji Pawar, Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindia a band of remarkable soldiers who were prepared to carry out the commands of the Peshwa. Assisted by those brave captains and the soldiers they commanded, the Peshwa launched on his career of conquest.

3

The Struggle With Nizam-ul-Mulk

VERY EARLY in his life Baji Rao understood that eternal vigilance was required from his countrymen to guard the independence they had wrested from the Mughals. He had to strengthen the frontiers of the homeland before launching his forces on a career of conquest. The Deccan was a great point of resistance for it was here that the Mughals had consolidated into one big province the conquered countries of Bijapur and Golconda with its subah of Daulatabad and placed it under the command of a governor. The enormous resources of this province and its governance by an able administrator were a source of constant threat to Maratha independence. This wealthy and powerful province had now come under the leadership of Nizam-ul-Mulk, the ablest of the Turani chiefs, whose activities were directed towards circumventing the grandiose plans of the Marathas. In the Nizam, Baji Rao met a very able rival and an astute diplomat, at once brave, cunning and uncompromising. In his capacity to organize and command men, and manage intricate affairs with tact and promptitude, the Nizam had very few rivals. He was the "best Muslim general in India during the first half of the eighteenth century".

The contest between these two remarkable men was bitter and long. Both wanted to assert their supremacy. Baji Rao as the conscious and articulate instrument of Raja Shahu and backed by almost the entire Maratha nation, fought to build up a lasting and durable empire for his countrymen : the Nizam on the contrary, living amidst jealous, ambitious and undependable supporters, strove single-handed to perpetuate in the Deccan his suzerainty. Brought up in the imperial traditions and cunning diplomacy of Emperor Aurangzib, the Nizam had to foment dissension in his enemy's rank, resort to intrigues and take advantage of schisms among his adversaries to build up his edifice. The confused and anarchic state of the Deccan and the convulsions through which the moribund Empire had to pass soon after the death of Aurangzib were taken advantage of by both men.

The rise of Nizam-ul-Mulk to prominence is a shining example of the extent to which a resourceful man by a shrewd exploitation of favourable circumstances, could achieve his objects. Mir Qamruddin as he was known was born on the 11th August, 1671. His father Qilich Khan, who found service under the Mughals, was greatly valued by Emperor Aurangzib. Mir Qamruddin, like his father, joined service under Aurangzib. In 1691 he was given the title of Chin Qilich Khan. Slowly he became the leader of the Turani element. It was Emperor Faruksiyar who conferred on him the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk and appointed him Viceroy of the six Deccan subahs (Khandesh, Berar, Aurangabad, Bidar, Hyderabad and Bijapur) on the advice of his Chief Minister, Syed Abdullah Khan, who with his brother Hussain Ali wanted to be free to pursue their ambitious schemes without interference from the watchful Nizam-ul-Mulk. The Nizam left Delhi in May, 1713 for the South. In the Deccan he had to face the hostilities of the Marathas whose agents spread out everywhere collecting *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* granted to them by Zulfiqar Khan when he was the Viceroy of the Deccan. For nearly

two years the Nizam engaged himself actively in the intrigues directed towards disintegrating Shahu's power. On the appointment of Hussain Ali Khan as Viceroy of the Deccan, the Nizam was recalled to the court in May 1715.

With one of the Syed brothers far away in the Deccan Emperor Faruksiyar tried his level best to assert his imperial authority. He refused to ratify the treaty which Hussain Ali Khan had entered into with Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath Rao regarding Maratha right to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six Deccan subahs. It was clear to the Syed brothers that only by force and stratagem they could re-establish their authority. Hussain Ali Khan left the Deccan in November 1718, towards Delhi with a large contingent of Maratha soldiers under Balaji Vishwanath. By a combination of toughness and strategy the Syed brothers seized Faruksiyar, blinded him and threw him into a dungeon where he languished till he was strangled to death in a most cruel manner in April 1719. Nizam-ul-Mulk kept aloof watching the unscrupulous methods employed by the Syed brothers to gain their ends. For his masterly inaction the Nizam was made the Governor of Malwa. The Syed brothers set up Rafi-ud-darajat as Emperor. It was then that Balaji Vishwanath received the confirmation of the provisions of the treaty entered into earlier between Hussain Ali Khan and Raja Shahu. A firman issued on the 13th March, 1719 granted to the Marathas the right of collecting *chauth* from the six subahs of the Deccan, including the tributary states of Tanjore, Trichinopoly and Mysore. A second firman dated the 24th March, 1719 conceded *sardeshmukhi* (10% of the remaining three-fourths of the same revenue). By another firman Shahu was confirmed in the possession of the territories known as *swarajya* at the time of Shivaji's death (1680). "The confirmation of the treaty served as a great diplomatic and moral victory for Raja Shahu over his rival of Kolhapur and gave him the unequivocal leadership of the Maratha people. It marked the weakening of the imperial rule in the Deccan and a

death-blow to Mughal prestige all over the country. This one-sided bargain gave the Marathas an *imperium in imperio*, and secured to them predominance in the six talukas of the Deccan and the Carnatic and a legal recognition of their demands and pretensions."[1]

Rafi-ud-darajat died in June 1719. The Syed brothers declared his brother Rafi-ud-daulah as Emperor. And when the latter died in September Muhammad Shah was proclaimed Emperor and during all this time the opposition to the Syed brothers was slowly gathering. The accession of Muhammad Shah brought Nizam-ul-Mulk into prominence. Though the Emperor was destitute of talent, he came under the influence of his mother who proved a very able and courageous woman. In Nizam-ul-Mulk she found a daring and trustworthy friend. As there was little love lost between him and the Syed brothers, the Nizam entered into a plan with the queen-mother for the discomfiture of the Syeds. Slowly but steadily the Nizam established himself firmly in the province of Malwa and very soon resolved to make himself master of the rich province of the Deccan. The Deccan had always a peculiar attraction for him and as its viceroy during 1713—1715 he had mastered the technique of fighting in the Deccan. Moreover, he had successfully defended it against Maratha incursions. The Nizam thought that by subjugating the Deccan he could paralyse the authority of the Syeds and subsequently overthrow them. This bold plan was executed with masterly precision. Leaving Malwa with twelve thousand horses he crossed the Narmada in May 1720 and marched southwards to the great dismay of the Syeds who expected the grand rebel to advance towards Delhi. The impregnable fortress of Asirgad surrendered through bribery to the Nizam ; Burhanpur followed suit and the discontented elements of the Maratha court like Chandrasen Jadhav flocked under his banner.

The Viceroy of the Deccan at this time was Alam Ali

[1] Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan : *Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I*, p. 107

Khan, a nephew of the Syeds. To his help the Syeds sent Dilawar Khan. The Nizam wanted to destroy the forces of Dilawar Khan before they could unite with the Deccan forces. The technique of Deccan warfare was fully used by the Nizam to achieve his purpose. He took up his position near Ratanpur, thirty miles from Burhanpur and not far from Khandwa. He concealed his powerful artillery in the woods and retreated before his enemy. Dilawar Khan pursued his foe with such vigour that he was drawn deep into the woods and had to face the full force of the Nizam's concealed artillery. Dilawar Khan's forces fell like moths before this terriffic charge of the cannon while the Khan himself was hit and killed. The battle of Khandwa once again proved the Nizam's skill in leadership and planning. The same tactics were employed against Alam Ali Khan also at Balapur (31st July, 1720) and the massed batteries of the Nizam consumed by thousands the ill-fated Mughal soldiery.

The successes of the Nizam in the Deccan greatly perturbed the Syed brothers whose plans for that province were thus frustrated by him. In order to restore their cause Hussain Ali Khan prepared to go to the Deccan after urging his brother Syed Abdullah Khan to proceed to Delhi to maintain order. But Hussain Ali Khan fell a victim to a plot engineered by Muhammad Amin Khan (Itimad-ud-daula), Saadat Khan who later on became Nawab of Oudh and Haider Quli Khan. The queen-mother also joined in the plot. Abdullah Khan was taken prisoner and later on poisoned.

The elimination of the Syed brothers also left the coast clear for the Nizam. In fact the Nizam was now the supreme master of the situation. The Peshwa knew that it would be difficult for him to realise the imperial grants obtained in 1719 especially when the Nizam was determined to repudiate the Maratha claims. Raja Shahu thought that a meeting between the Peshwa and the Nizam would straighten out the matter. And so on the 4th January, 1721

Baji Rao and the Nizam met at Chikhalthan. But beyond all the grandeur and dazzle of the meeting nothing tangible came out. Baji Rao was convinced that it would not be possible for the Marathas to realise their claims without a battle with the Nizam.

The successful removal of the Syed brothers restored the authority of Emperor Muhammad Shah. The Emperor now offered the post of Vazir to Nizam-ul-Mulk. Though he hesitated to accept the offer he had to yield because of the Emperor's ardent importunities. The Nizam appointed Ewaz Khan in charge of the Deccan government and left Aurangabad on the 21st October, 1721 for Delhi. Thus the conqueror of the Deccan became the Emperor's first Minister (February, 1722). The Nizam was also permitted to retain the Governorship of Malwa and the Viceroyalty of the Deccan.

The attempts of the Nizam to improve the administration of Muhammad Shah proved of no avail. The grim and taciturn soldier brought up in the austere traditions of Alamgir had to fight against the venality and corruption that surrounded the youthful Emperor's court. The opposition from the courtiers was too much and the Emperor was too licentious; and therefore the Nizam found it impossible to discharge his functions as Vazir. On the top of it all the machinations of Haider Quli Khan, the Viceroy of Gujarat became intolerable. So towards the end of 1722 the Nizam left for Gujarat to restore order there. Haider Quli Khan was ousted and the Nizam assumed the Viceroyalty of Gujarat. He appointed Hamid Khan as his deputy. He then proceeded to Malwa to oust the Marathas. This challenge was accepted by Baji Rao who proceeded into Malwa with a well-equipped army. But fortunately there was no open hostility; a second meeting between Baji Rao and the Nizam was arranged at Bolasha on the borders between Malwa and Gujarat (February, 1723). Nothing concrete came out of this meeting also. The Nizam returned to Delhi to tell the Emperor that he had succeeded in

checking the aggression of the Marathas.

The renewed attempts of the Nizam to restore some sort of order in the administration brought him into collision with Emperor Muhammad Shah who was made to believe by his boon companions that the Vazir wanted to depose him. The only course open to the Nizam was to leave Delhi. He begged leave to resign his office as Vazir and desired to go to Malwa, Gujarat and the Deccan. Muhammad Shah seized the opportunity and graciously granted his request. Nizam-ul-Mulk was given the title of Asaf Jah and *Vakil-i-Mulk* or Agent-General of the Emperor. The Nizam left Delhi in December, 1723 and after visiting Malwa, proceeded south. Already the Emperor had sent word to Mubariz Khan, the Commandant of the Hyderabad fort, to destroy the Viceroy and assume the Viceroyalty himself.

Here was a conflict of great import which did not fail to attract the attention of Raja Shahu. The Raja alerted his sardars to be ready for any eventuality that might develop as a result of the activities of the Nizam. But the Nizam was a very shrewd man. He realised he could not fight both the Marathas and Mubariz Khan at the same time. He, therefore, resorted to diplomacy. He met Baji Rao at Nalcha, near Dhar, on the 18th May, 1724. Both professed friendship without revealing their exact intentions. Mubariz Khan also solicited Maratha help. In this struggle it was Raja Shahu's desire that the Marathas should remain neutral. But Baji Rao wanted to utilize the situation and take possession of whatever territory that could be annexed.

The forces of Mubariz Khan and the Nizam met at Shakar Khera, 80 miles from Aurangabad. In the action that ensued (2nd October, 1724), the Nizam's superior fighting qualities once more helped him to win the day. Mubariz Khan was killed and his army was overthrown. Thereafter the Nizam sent Mubariz Khan's head to Emperor Muhammad Shah just to spite him. Thus did this remarkable man

enter once again the Deccan to enlarge and realise his plans for self-aggrandizement. The battle of Shakar Khera "marks the establishment in the Deccan of Nizam-ul-Mulk's hereditary rule, though he had been virtually independent since the fall of the Syed brothers." The Emperor pardoned the Nizam for his offences, restored all the jagirs he held before he became Vazir, and conferred on him the Viceroyalty of the Deccan provinces. But Gujarat and Malwa were taken away from the Nizam's control. To the former was appointed Sarbuland Khan while Giridhar Bahadur was named to Malwa. From now on, though the Nizam owed normal allegiance to the Emperor in reality he was the *de facto* sovereign of the Deccan.

Having entrenched himself the Nizam turned his attention to deal with the Marathas. He directed his tact, diplomacy and military prowess to dislodge his powerful neighbours and annihilate them if possible. In this grand endeavour he did not minimize the resourcefulness and organizing ability of his powerful adversary, Baji Rao. He had to resort to many means to achieve his aggressive aspirations. He transferred his capital from Aurangabad to the more distant but militarily strategic and impregnable city of Hyderabad with a view to prevent the Marathas from getting an inkling of his activities. Having done this he sowed seeds of dissension among the discontented nobles of Shahu by offering them attractive baits for joining his camp. Already Maratha sardars like Rao Rambha Nimbalkar and Chandrasen Jadhav were in Mughal service. Now Udaji Chavan, the sworn enemy of Shahu and the Peshwa, joined the Nizam. The two expeditions of Baji Rao into the Carnatic in 1725 and 1726 were frowned upon by the Nizam as he thought that they interfered with his suzerainty in that part of the country. In course of time the Nizam was able to attract more renegades such as Senasaheb Subha, Kanhoji Bhonsle and Sar-lashkar Sultanji Nimbalkar who became jealous of the growing power of the young Peshwa. Shripatrao, the Pratinidhi, also deve-

loped sympathies for the Nizam. His opposition to the Peshwa urged him to join any party aiming at frustrating the grand designs of Baji Rao. The Nizam offered to the Pratinidhi a jagir in Berar as a substitute for the *chauth* payable on his new capital. In spite of the protests of Baji Rao, the Pratinidhi prevailed upon Shahu to approve the exchange as such a gesture, he said, would win the sympathies of the Nizam.

The Nizam now felt that the time had come for him to exploit the weakness of the Maratha King further. He declared that he would not pay to the Maratha government its *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* until the question as to who was the real head of the Maratha state had been settled. "Who is the ruler?" he asked. "Is it Shahu or Rajaram's son Sambhaji?" In order to settle this question he invited both Shahu and Sambhaji to send their representatives to Hyderabad where he would hear them and decide which of the two princes had the better right to the crown of the Marathas. This audacious suggestion amazed even the innocuous Shahu who now realised that he had to rely more on his Peshwa than on his Pratinidhi. There was only one course open and that was to tell the Nizam of the absurdity of his suggestion. Only force could compel the Nizam to come to reason. And so Shahu declared war on the Nizam as advised by Baji Rao.

The Nizam succeeded in winning over to his side Sambhaji who joined him with a large Maratha force. By this move he thought he had won half the battle. He had also the satisfaction of having plunged Maharashtra into a civil war between the cousins for years to come. In a letter to Sawai Jaisingh the Nizam explained that he had undertaken the task to chastise Shahu in order to satisfy the Emperor and give him proof of his loyalty and devotion. To carry out the Emperor's wish, he said he had called to his side Raja Sambhaji. The Nizam concluded by stating that now that the Marathas had permanently planted their claws in all the imperial territory and their strength and power had

also increased beyond limit, "I have challenged them to fight solely out of reliance upon the grace of God and the Emperor's favour."

In this enterprise the Nizam overlooked the strength and organizing capacity of Baji Rao who proved as unconquerable in the field as he was unassailable in the Council Chamber. On the 27th August, 1727 Baji Rao marched his myriads of Maratha soldiers into the field. This was the first time that the Peshwa was going to battle against a trained soldier and a skilled organizer like the Nizam who was a past-master in the technique of Deccan warfare. Neither age nor the accumulated experience of his adversary daunted the young Peshwa. His one object was to convince the Nizam that his opponent was far more subtle and cunning and possessed in abundance remarkable courage and leadership.

The Peshwa first entered the Aurangabad district and plundered Jalna and the surrounding districts. To oppose Baji Rao, the Nizam sent a force under Ewaz Khan. The Peshwa outmarched his enemy and proceeded to plunder the rich city of Burhanpur. In order to protect Burhanpur from the depradations of the Marathas, the Nizam hastened to join Ewaz Khan. Before this Baji Rao had already left Khandesh, entered Gujarat and subjected it to plunder — to the utter consternation of its Viceroy, Sarbuland Khan.

These plundering expeditions of the Peshwa into the Nizam's dominions were greatly resented by him. He wanted to take Poona by storm for which purpose he marched his whole army against that city. After occupying Poona, the Nizam proclaimed Sambhaji as the *Chhatrapati* of the Marathas and had him married to a Rajput lady of the Sisodia clan of Ramnagar. Meanwhile, Baji Rao left Gujarat and attacked the Nizam's dominion along the banks of the Godavari. The Nizam was alarmed with the movements of his elusive adversary. He appointed Fazal Beg to hold Poona and then marched eastwards where having crossed the Godavari he waited for

Baji Rao. The Peshwa knew that the Nizam's cavalry had been tired out; he drew the whole Deccan army away from the river banks into the hilly tract near the town of Palkhed, twenty miles west of Daulatabad. Here the Peshwa ordered his soldiers to charge the Nizam's army which was surrounded on all sides by the Maratha cavalry (28th February, 1728). It was only the massed batteries of the Nizam that saved him from complete capitulation and enabled him to reach the Godavari river near the town of Mungi Shevgaon.

The retreat to this place did not save the Nizam from the clutches of the Peshwa and there was only one course open to him, namely to open negotiations. Baji Rao took advantage of the plight of his adversary and demanded the recognition of Shahu Maharaj as the only sovereign of the Marathas entitled to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six subahs of the Deccan, the re-instatement of all Maratha officers dismissed by the Nizam, the payment of all arrears of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* and last but not least the surrender of the person of Sambhaji who had betrayed the cause of the Marathas by joining their opponents. The Nizam was prepared to concede all the demands save the one regarding the surrender of Sambhaji as he thought it would be dishonourable to deliver him to the Peshwa. The Nizam insisted that Sambhaji should be permitted to proceed to Panhala with all his forces and that Maharaj Shahu might deal with him later on as he deemed it fit.

This treaty known as the treaty of Mungi Shevgaon was signed on the 6th March 1728.[2] The Peshwa thereafter permitted the Nizam to retire to his dominions. Thus the Ni-

[2] "This treaty is a land-mark in the history of the Deccan. It shows that even a man like Nizam-ul-Mulk was obliged by force of circumstances to accept the pretensions of the Marathas, although in later years he succeeded in neutralising the effects of the treaty by his skillful diplomatic manipulations. This treaty infinitely enhanced Baji Rao's power and influence in the Maratha State." Dr. Yusuf Hussain Khan: *Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah* I, pp. 189–90

zam's bold attempt to challenge and if possible destroy the authority of the Marathas was decisively frustrated by the Peshwa. The victory at Palkhed was a great achievement for the young Peshwa and undoubtedly a great blow to the prestige of the Nizam. It was a proud and auspicious day phed at the outset of his career, over the veteran arms and "for the young and gallant Brahmin, who had thus trium-redoubted artifices of Aurangzeb's old lieutenant, the conqueror in so many fields, and but lately, apparently almost dictator of the Empire!"[3] Palkhed inaugurated the series of triumphs which the Peshwa by his leadership came to achieve in the years to come. It was also a lesson to the disgruntled renegades of Shahu's Court that it was no mean task to challenge the Peshwa's authority. Although Nizam-ul-Mulk was beaten he did not give up the struggle.

[3] Sydney Owen: *India on the Eve of the British Conquest*, p. 97

4

Gujarat Affair

HAVING REMOVED the threat from the Nizam, Baji Rao now turned his attention to Gujarat, the rich and valued possession of the Mughal Empire since its conquest by Akbar in 1573. Gujarat, the beauty and ornament of India as Emperor Aurangzib once described it, was famous all over for its handicrafts and enormous wealth. Its two ports, Broach and Surat were the main gateways through which passed all the merchandise of the rich inland districts of Khandesh, Malwa, Berar and upper India. " Through Surat passed the enormous volume of Muslim pilgrims to the holy cities of Arabia. Travellers, merchants, scholars, fortune hunters and political refugees from Persia, Arabia, Turkey, Zanzibar and even Khurasan and Barbary used to enter India through the Gujarat ports."[1] For a very long time Gujarat was the battleground for the Marathas and the Mughals, the one plundering the rich province and the other trying to stem the ever increasing onslaughts of the Marathas. In 1664 and in 1670 Shivaji sacked Surat. In 1672 the Maratha soldier, Moro Trimbak, reduced Jawhar and Ramnagar. Year after year, the Marathas subjected

[1] Sarkar: *Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 426

he and Giridhar Bahadur, who was going to take charge of the government of Malwa, left Delhi, followed closely by Najm-ud-din Ali Khan who had been appointed second in command of a large force. With the advance of the imperial army, Hamid Khan thought it wise to retire but his confederates Kanthaji and Pilaji would not. Sarbuland Khan reached Ahmedabad towards the close of 1725. The new Viceroy, determined to drive out Kanthaji and Pilaji from his domain, sent his son Khanahzad Khan against them. Khanahzad Khan defeated the Marathas first near Sojitra, about ten miles north-west of Petlad, and then at Kapadvanj, and pursued them as far as the hills of Ali Mohan in the extreme east of the province. Though defeated, Kanthaji and Pilaji would not leave the Viceroy in peace. They returned for the tribute and plundered as usual.

It was at this juncture that Peshwa Baji Rao opened direct negotiations with the Viceroy of Gujarat (February 1727). The Peshwa was also anxious to undermine the authority of Trimbak Rao in Gujarat and establish the King's sway over it. He therefore asked from Sarbuland Khan a confirmation of the right to levy *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* over the whole country in return for which the Peshwa promised to protect the country from the depredations of Kanthaji, Pilaji and a horde of other invaders. The Mughal Viceroy could not agree to the terms of Baji Rao owing to the fact that the Emperor had repudiated the concessions made by Hamid Khan to Pilaji and Kanthaji. He, however, allowed the Peshwa's agent, Udaji Pawar, to operate against Pilaji. To circumvent the Peshwa's plan, Pilaji invited Kanthaji to join him in expelling Udaji Pawar and his men from Gujarat. With their combined forces Pilaji and Kanthaji proceeded to Baroda and succeeded in driving back Udaji and occupying Dabhoi and Baroda. Subsequently during the next year Kanthaji took possession of Champaner, thus advancing his posts nearer the centre of the province. These successes enabled them to renew their

depredations in greater frequency.

All these activities increased the troubles of Sarbuland Khan who was already discredited in the court. The monthly subvention he used to get from the centre to maintain his unwiedly army was stopped. Nor was the revenue of despoiled Gujarat enough to run the administration and defend the province. Consequently he was compelled to ask for Baji Rao's assistance. The Peshwa immediately sent his brother Chimnaji Appa with an army to Gujarat. Petlad and Dholka were plundered. Since the situation was hopeless the Mughal Viceroy agreed on the 23rd March 1730 formally to cede to the Peshwa the *sardeshmukhi* and the *chauth* of Gujarat. Surat was not included. It was also provided that only five per cent on the revenue from the city of Ahmedabad would be given to the Marathas. Special clauses were also inserted in the grant of *chauth* to suit the convenience of both the Peshwa and the Viceroy. The latter stipulated that as few collectors as possible should be kept by the Marathas in the district under tribute, and that no extra demands beyond the one-fourth should be made. He also insisted that the percentage should be calculated on the actual collections and not on the highest sum recorded as having been collected. The Marathas were also to support the imperial authority and maintain a body of horses. The Peshwa agreed to prevent all Maratha subjects from joining disaffected chiefs or other turbulent characters, thus receiving the right to suppress Kanthaji and Pilaji as well as the Bills and Kolis with whom the latter was on very friendly terms.

No doubt Sarbuland Khan was able to buy peace, but he could not convince Delhi about the wisdom of his action and Khan Dauran, who had just then become Minister, would not agree to the Viceroy's conduct. One of his first acts was to dismiss Sarbuland Khan for accepting the Maratha claim to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in Gujarat. Abhay Singh who succeeded his father Ajit Singh as Maharaja of Jodhpur, was selected by Khan Dauran to the Vice-

royalty of Gujarat. Sarbuland Khan was not a man to give up without a fight. He defeated the deputy sent to take over charge and drove him out of the province. The same treatment was given to Abhay Singh who appeared in person with a big army (1730). Sarbuland Khan could not rest in peace after this victory. He was overpowered by a sense of fear as to what Khan Dauran might do, and therefore to avoid any ill-will Sarbuland Khan visited Abhay Singh and told him that he could enter Ahmedabad. By this act Sarbuland Khan hoped to escape punishment. However, Khan Dauran had made up his mind. When Sarbuland Khan was on his way to Delhi he was arrested at Agra and made a state prisoner. He was no doubt pardoned afterwards, but the treatment caused not a little disgust to one who had rendered great service to the Empire.

Baji Rao's successful action in Gujarat kindled the wrath of the Senapati Trimbak Rao, who regarded Gujarat as the special sphere of influence of the Dabhades. He could not brook the Peshwa's interference in his ancestral domain where his father's conquests and prestige had built a great name for the Dabhades. Nor did the concession made by Shahu in assigning to the Senapati the *chauth* (mokassa) of the province and collection of a part of the *sardeshmukhi*, mollify Trimbak Rao. He had watched with mortification the rise of the Peshwa to prominence and the influence exercised by him over the King. He was not prepared to reconcile to a state of affairs which would relegate him and others similarly situated to a secondary position through the actions of the Peshwa. He, therefore, became the centre around which all malcontents and disgruntled chiefs opposed to the Peshwa gathered. In course of time Pilaji Gaikwad, Kanthaji Kadam Bande, Udaji Pawar, Kanhoji Bhonsle and others flocked under the banner of revolt raised by the Senapati.

It was in this atmosphere of gathering discontent that the Nizam saw once again an opportunity to work for the destruction of the Peshwa and the assertion of his supre-

macy. The Nizam revealed to Deep Singh, the envoy of Raja Jai Singh that he had "no good opinion of Baji Rao's faith or humanity", and considered that the Peshwa was "inordinately arrogant" and deserved to be severely handled. He wanted to repudiate the treaty of Mungi Shevgaon and free himself from the limitations imposed by the Peshwa. So he agreed to Trimbak Rao Dabhade's proposal that they should jointly attempt the overthrow of the Peshwa's rule. By this joint endeavour the Nizam probably hoped to capture "Baji Rao alive or put him to such a rout and plunder that he would never raise his head again." Prince Sambhaji was also invited to join the alliance against the Peshwa.

Sambhaji egged on by his ambititous wife Jijabai thought that this was an opportunity to make another attempt to regain the throne for himself. He found in Udaji Chavan a strong supporter. He also relied on the promises of Nizam-ul-Mulk to restore him to the throne. Shahu tried every means to wean his royal cousin from the pernicious influence of the Nizam. He wrote a lengthy letter to Sambhaji in which he stated: "This kingdom is a gift from God. How can you hope to win success by seeking the protection of a Muslim? If you wanted to have a separate kingdom of your own, you could have communicated your desire to us. We possess men of pre-eminent capacity some of whom would have accompanied you and procured for you a kingdom of your own ; or you should have acquired one by your own powers. We are at present acquiring fresh territories to add to our kingdom out of those seized by the Mughals. You could have followed a similar course and made your own mark. But to ask a share out of what we have gained is not right. Your revered father the late Rajaram Maharaj went as far as Gingee and eventually obtained a kingdom through great personal effort. He then returned to his home in Maharasthra, plundered rich and renowned cities and made a name for himself. You must be well aware what a keen interest he took in our

welfare, and what efforts he made to get us released from the imperial confinement. Knowing all this, your seeking the protection of a Muslim governor was not at all proper. You should at once quit the Mughals and come back to us. We will ourselves grant you whatever you need most willingly. But to claim a share in a kingdom has no religious sanction. You must give up this evil course. Chandrasen Jadhav's conduct in proving faithless to us and accepting service under Mughal government is most reprehensible; coming as he does from the Jadhav family of Ramdev Rao of Devgiri, he openly acted against the Maharashtra *Dharma*, i.e., the sacred policy enjoined by our religion. It was the height of folly on your part to have acted upon the advice of such a renegade and served the Muslim ends."[4]

The above sentiments had no effect on Sambhaji whose mentor was the boastful Udaji Chavan. The latter began to plunder Shahu's territories. It was then that both Baji Rao and Chimnaji Appa were busy conducting campaigns in Malwa and Bundelkhand in 1729. Early in 1730 Shahu undertook the campaign against Udaji Chavan. A plot engineered by Udaji Chavan to murder Shahu was discovered and the concerned persons were arrested. This was the signal for Shahu to become alive to the seriousness of the situation. He ordered the army under Shripat Rao Pratinidhi to march against Sambhaji. Shripat Rao attacked Sambhaji's concentration on the banks of the Warna. Both Sambhaji and Udaji were routed and they fled to Panhala. The ladies of Sambhaji's court including his aunt Tarabai, Rani Jijabai and the household staff were captured and taken before Shahu. Shahu allowed them all to go to Panhala. Tarabai, however, chose to go with Shahu to Satara. Sambhaji's position was becoming hopeless. Thanks to Tarabai's intercession a meeting between the cousins was arranged. On the banks of the Krishna not far away from Satara, amidst great rejoicings and royal pageantry the

[4] G. S. Sardesai: *op. cit.*, pp. 116-7

cousins met on the 27th February 1731. The merriment continued for several days and the whole Maharashtra pulsated with the happy news of the reunion of the cousins and the termination of the civil war. A treaty of peace was concluded and ratified on the 13th April 1731. This treaty known as the treaty of Warna made the Warna river the boundary between the two kingdoms. Sambhaji was given independent sovereignty of the territory south of the Warna river and stretching upto the bank of the Tungabhadra. The southern districts beyond the Tungabhadra right upto Rameshwar was divided equally between the cousins. With this treaty Shahu was able to delimit the authority of Sambhaji.

Intelligence reached the Peshwa about the preparations set afoot by the Senapati and the Nizam for striking a blow to the Peshwa's authority. He had been warned by his agent in the Nizam's court, of the secret plans hatched to overthrow Shahu and the Peshwa. In November 1730 the Peshwa's agent informed him that the Nizam "entertains venom in his breast, is full of wiles and stratagem. Kanthaji, Udaji and Kanhoji Bhonsle are frequent visitors here and are being seduced by Anand Rao Sumant, who has assured the Nizam that King Shahu would not be sorry at all if Baji Rao is put down, and that not a dog would bark at such a result." The agent also stated that "Dabhade and Bande have written to the Nizam asking for assurance of shelter, if they succeed in humbling the Peshwa and in putting an end to Shahu's *Raj*. They contemplate making Sambhaji, the *Chhatrapati*, Dabhade his Senapati and Kanthaji Bande his Sarlaskar." In these circumstances, the Peshwa had no other option but to take strong measures to defend Shahu and the Maratha *Raj*. It necessitated the straining of all the resources the Peshwa could command. It was a great struggle and Baji Rao was determined to destroy the unholy alliance.

The Senapati with the help of Kanthaji, Pilaji and Udaji, was able to collect about 35,000 men in Gujarat. There-

after he stated publicly that he was going to rescue the Maratha Raja from the sway of the Peshwa. At the same time preparations were made by the Nizam to combine his army with that of the Senapati. In addition to this, he entered into negotiations with the Mughal Governor of Malwa, Muhammad Khan Bangash, to enlist his help in his attempt to overthrow the Maratha power. Trimbak Rao's friends at the Satara court told Shahu that it was Chimnaji Appa who was at fault and not the Senapati. They argued that Gujarat belonged by right to the Dabhades and it was only the Peshwa's avarice that kindled him to wage a war in that quarter. In order to appease the Senapati, Shahu Raja restored to him the collection of the *chauth* of Gujarat (15th December 1730).[5] This move was greatly resented by Baji Rao. He apprised the Raja of the collusive dealings between the Senapati and the Nizam and their preparations for a general attack. He charged Trimbak Rao with treason to his royal master and stated that his armed rebellion amounted to an attempt to overthrow the authority of Shahu Raja in order to enrich himself. He would neither allow the cupidity of Trimbak Rao nor the inordinate ambition of the Nizam to destroy the programme he had chalked out for the Maratha nation. He was determined that this pernicious Dabhade-Nizam

5 Shahu tried every means to win over the Senapathi. But when he found that Dabhade was compassing the destruction of the Peshwa in collusion with the Nizam, the Raja had to admonish him. In a letter Shahu wrote to Dabhade: "You have been a loyal Hindu servant of the state and as such we have all along dealt with you most kindly. You have nevertheless deserted to the enemy taking offence at something we are not aware of. You must know what fate traitors meet with. We urge you, therefore to forget all wrongs, to remember how your ancestors behaved and serve the state instead of the enemy so that the nation may be proud of your conduct. You must exert yourself to execute our commands and with increasing favours from us such a conduct alone will be noble. You have to subdue the nation's enemies and not join them. You must work to extend the Maratha *Raj*. This warning is addressed to you in full confidence that you will remain a loyal servant of the state and not molest the poor innocent ryots." G. S. Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, pp. 124-5

alliance should be broken. Shahu also realised that it was treason on the part of Trimbak Rao to have entered into an alliance with the Nizam and also in calling upon Sambhaji to join it.

The Peshwa marched into Gujarat with a view to dislodge Trimbak Rao and his allies. The new Viceroy of Gujárat, Abhay Singh, met the Peshwa (Feb. 1731) and renewed the pact concluded last year. The Peshwa agreed to accept 13 lakhs of rupees in lieu of *chauth.* Six lakhs were paid immediately and the remaining sum, it was stipulated, would be paid on his leaving the Gujarat country after expelling Kanthaji and Pilaji. This agreement was a challenge to the rights of the Senapati and his chiefs in Gujarat. Trimbak Rao was not willing to allow this without a battle. He put to field his units and those under Pilaji and Kanthaji as well as the Nizam's contingent led by Mominyar Khan and Kunwar Bahadur. The Peshwa's army though inferior in strength consisted mostly of well-trained horsemen who could use fire-arms. But the Senapati used elephants and fought with arrows. His was an army fitted for pitched battles. The Peshwa's army closed on the allies near Dabhoi (1st April 1731) and easily defeated the irregular contingents under Pilaji and Kanthaji. However, the old soldiers of Khande Rao Dabhade fought for his son Trimbak Rao with singular devotion and desperate valour. Trimbak Rao was directing the operations from the howdah of his elephant. The Peshwa was greatly impressed with the valour of his enemy and proposed a truce with these words: "Such gallantry as yours should be shown against the Maharaja's enemies. Let us stay the fight and once more try to effect a compromise." This fair offer was turned down by Trimbak Rao. A stray shot killed him. There was consternation and the allies melted away. Kanthaji fled, Pilaji who was wounded sought shelter in the Dabhoi fort.[6]

6 The Peshwa in describing this event to his Guru Brahmendraswami

Baji Rao's victory at Dabhoi convinced the Nizam that he should persuade the Peshwa to come to a permanent understanding with him. He, therefore, solicited the Peshwa to meet him for discussing mutual problems to arrive at a settlement. On the 27th December, 1732 the two chiefs met at Rohe-Rameshwar, eight miles north of Latur and entered into a secret compact by which it was arranged that Nizam-ul-Mulk was "to be left undisturbed in the Dekhin on condition that Baji Rao might pursue undisturbed his designs against the northern part of the Mughal empire."[7] Baji Rao described his meeting with the Nizam in his account to Chimnaji Appa as follows: "I proceeded by rapid marches towards Latur, where I learnt that the Nawab was at Koti near Vagir about twenty miles away. On 25th December I despatched Anand Rao Sumant to meet the Nawab and arrange details of my visit. An immediate reply was received from the Sumant and as I advanced, the Nawab cancelling his journey to Hyderabad came especially to meet me and halted at a convenient open plain. Next day 27th December, I proceeded with my full force to the Nawab's camp. Upon my arrival the Nawab removed the usual armed guard from his gate and posted Sumant, Rao Rambha and Turk-Taz Khan to wait at the gate to receive and admit me. I left my troops outside and went in with two hundred followers. The Nawab sent a party of a few special officers

stated: "Dabhade with his allies came forward for an encounter on 4th Shanval. Trimbak Rao himself, Javji Dabhade, Maloji Pawar and Pilaji Gaikwad's son Sambhaji were killed outright. Udaji Pawar and Chimnaji Damodar were captured. Pilaji Gaikwad and Kunwar Bahadur escaped wounded. A large booty was secured. Our side too lost a few brave ones in the battle." G. S. Sardesai: *op. cit.*, p. 128

7 Irvine: *Later Mughals*, Vol. II, p. 252

According to Elphinstone: "The Nizam entered into a secret compact with Baji Rao by which the Maratha government promised to leave the Deccan unmolested and to levy nothing beyond *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from them; while the Nizam agreed to remain neutral during the projected Maratha invasions of Hindustan provided they did not injure the province of Khandesh in their northward march through it."

to conduct me in and, himself with Aiwaz Khan and Hamid Khan stood in front of his tent. As I advanced I first accosted the receiving officers and they introduced me to the Nawab. He then received me with great respect and cordiality. After spending a few minutes together in the open Darbar exchanging enquiries of welcome, the Nawab took me by the hand and led me to another tent for a confidential talk where only Rao Rambha, Turk-Taz Khan and four of my companions were present. Here we talked long and freely upon many topics in a vein of the utmost cordiality and happiness. The Nawab highly applauded me and our *Chhatrapati*. After an hour's conversation he offered me *pan* and the same was distributed to all our party outside. Thus the visit was concluded and I returned to my quarters an hour before evening. Thereupon we received from the Nawab grand and sufficient rations for our dinner, baskets of sweet-meats and fruits, these extending in a long line from his camp to ours. I had made before now three visits to the Nawab, but those were only formal with no opening of hearts. This time, however, we discussed many questions openly, cementing our mutual goodwill and friendship. Whatever suspicions and fears had existed formerly, have now been completely removed. The Nawab repeatedly expressed a desire that our cordiality and pleasant relations would go on ever increasing. He specially called Sultanji Nimbalkar and Chandrasen Jadhav for my visit and asked me to extend my kindly attention to them."[8] The Peshwa returned to the Deccan and the Nizam, though foiled in his plan, was hatching another.

There are many views on the Peshwa's victory at Dabhoi over the Senapati. Whatever they may be, it may not be untrue to say that Baji Rao's action was motivated by a supreme desire to preserve the unity of the growing empire and destroy those elements which were opposed to it. More than that, he could not tolerate a union between Dabhade

[8] G. S. Sardesai : *op. cit.*, pp. 143-4

and the Nizam whose main purpose was the elimination of the Peshwa's authority, the removal of Shahu and the installation of the Nizam's protege Sambhaji as the Maratha King. If that had happened the coast would have been clear for the adroit Nizam to further his aggrandizements and humiliate the Peshwa. However, Baji Rao's victory over Dabhade removed that gloomy prospect.

Towards the family of the slain Senapati Baji Rao behaved with great magnanimity. He conferred the title of Senapati on Yeswant Rao, the minor son of the deceased Trimbak Rao, but being too young his grand mother Uma Bai became his guardian, with Pilaji as deputy or *mutalik* in Gujarat. He also received a new title, namely that of *Sena Khas Khel*, in addition to his hereditary one of Shamsher Bahadur. At the instance of King Shahu and with a view to prevent any further disputes an agreement was entered into between Pilaji, acting on behalf of the Senapati and Baji Rao stipulating that neither party should enter the boundary of the other in Gujarat and Malwa. Within the province of Gujarat the Senapati will have the entire management but must pay one half of the collections to the treasury through the Peshwa. All other contributions collected from territories not specified in the deeds of Sarbuland Khan should be surrendered to the treasury after taking into account the necessary expenses.

To Abhay Singh, the Mughal Viceroy of Gujarat, all these arrangements were sickening. He was determined to recover the territory lost to the Marathas by the action of his predecessor. It was a difficult task. Pilaji had established himself in Baroda and several other places with the help and assistance of the hillmen of Gujarat with whom he was very popular. Abhay Singh knew that he could not defeat the intrepid Pilaji in battle ; he, therefore, resorted to stratagem and baser methods. Under the pretext of inviting Pilaji to a friendly meeting Abhay Singh had him assassinated in the village of Dakor (14th April, 1732). Thereafter the Mughal Viceroy attacked the forces of Pilaji. He

Abhay Singh, invited Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindia to assist them against the ambitions of Jawan Mard Khan. The Maratha leaders forced Jawan Mard Khan to pay a sum of Rs. 1,75,000/-. In the next year Damaj Gaikwad's agent Rangoji defeated Kanthaji Kadam Bande at Anand Mogri, 25 miles south east of Kaira, and obtained from Momin Khan the right to collect *chauth* in northern Gujarat.

Fighting continued between Ratan Singh Bhandari, the deputy Viceroy and Rangoji whom he forced in 1736 to take shelter in Viramgam. However, when another Maratha force under Pratap Rao, brother of Damaji, advanced against Ahmedabad, Ratan Singh abandoned the siege of Viramgam and returned to his capital. It was at this time that the Viceroyalty of Gujarat was transferred from Abhay Singh to Momin Khan. The new Viceroy in order to restore order and regain his capital, asked the Marathas to help him. Damaji's agent Rangoji agreed to assist him on condition that he was granted one half of the produce of Gujarat except the city of Ahmedabad, the lands in the neighbourhood of the city and the port of Cambay. Momin Khan agreed and with it synchronised the last stage in the gradual elimination of Mughal power in Gujarat.

Assisted by Damaji and his Maratha troops, Momin Khan laid siege to Ahmedabad which Ratan Singh Bhandari was not prepared to surrender. From the fort Ratan Singh sent a communication to Damaji in these words: "Momin Khan has promised Rangoji half of the revenues of Gujarat excepting the city of Ahmedabad, the lands immediately round it, and Cambay. If you will join me I will give you half of everything not excepting the city nor Cambay, and will send to your camp some of my chief land-holders as security if you agree." When Damaji apprised Momin Khan of this, the latter agreed to similar terms except that instead of Cambay he would give Viramgam. To this Damaji agreed. The siege began in right earnest and on the 26th May, 1737 Ratan Singh Bhandari surrendered and

marched out of Ahmedabad.

The Maratha influence in Gujarat became more and more pronounced and the last vestiges of Mughal rule disappeared with the conquest of Ahmedabad in 1753 by the forces of Damaji Gaikwad and Raghunath Rao.[9] The Dabhades and the Gaikwads were thus responsible for the expansion of Maratha power in Gujarat. The latter, especially Pilaji and Damaji Gaikwad, were mainly instrumental for the success of Maratha arms in Gujarat.

[9] M. S. Commissariat: *A History of Gujarat*, Vol. II, pp. 514-5

5

Conquest of Malwa

THE DECLINE of the Mughal power in the north gave an opportunity for the Marathas to extend their field of operation across the Narmada into the Mughal subahs. Already by the sanads of 1719 the Marathas had obtained from the Mughal Emperor the possession of all the territories known as Shivaji's *swarajya* and the right to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from all the six Mughal subahs in the south. It was also stated that the territories in Khandesh, Berar, Gondwana, Hyderabad and Karnatak recently conquered by the Marathas should be ceded to them. These rights "constituted the Magna Carta of Maratha Dominion". Thus their position in the south had been strengthened. But Balaji Vishwanath could not get similar sanads for the subahs of Malwa and Gujarat. The troubled state of the Empire and the struggle for power at Delhi emboldened Bāji Rao to extend further north the Maratha hold on Mughal dominion.

The time was most propitious. Emperor Aurangzib's policy of religious intolerance had completely alienated the Hindus. His treatment of the Rajputs who had supported the Mughal Emperors all along convinced them that they had shed their blood in the cause of the Empire in vain.

The Maratha resistance in the south was an eye-opener to the Jats, to the Rajputs and the Sikhs who all gathered to disrupt the Mughal Empire. And in Baji Rao they found a great leader and an inspirer of men. He urged on his monarch Shahu the need to march on the Mughal dominions and assert the Maratha rights in Malwa and Khandesh. He pointed out that the time was most opportune to strike. He declared : "The Mughal power is lying prostrate, it is nearing its end, it is torn by factions and internecine feuds, the Padishah desires to bolster up his throne with our support. You speak of the Nizam breaking the treaty and commencing hostilities. But he is of no account. Aurangzeb when a prince, reduced the subah of Aurangabad and resided there ; undeterred by his presence the great Shivaji attacked the Adil Shahi and Qutab Shahi kingdoms and laid them under tribute. After him Shambaji lost everything — his forts, his kingdom and his life. The Padishah remained in the Deccan with a formidable army to round off his conquests. Undaunted Rajaram carried on the struggle from Gingee. After a time even that citadel was lost to the enemy and the Padishah was still there with his innumerable hordes. Despite these heavy odds Rajaram marched on Aurangabad, ravaged the enemy's country, wrested his forts and recovered the entire kingdom from the Mughal. (Now the situation has changed in our favour). You (a monarch of great qualities) occupy a throne, are assisted by able commanders. Our aid is sought by the Mughals and by its means kings are made and unmade. Is not this the moment when we should attempt to seize supreme political power ? I undertake to hold the Nizam in check as well as effect a northward drive. You speak of reducing (South) Karnatak as more urgent, but hardly any opposition is to be encountered in that quarter. The old Adil Shahi and Qutab Shahi no longer exist. The reduction of Karnatak is as good as a domestic affair and can be easily effected by the Huzarat troops. The Pratinidhi will manage it. The great Shivaji's dream of a Hindu domina-

tion has remained unfulfilled to this date. Balaji Pant Nana had prepared the ground-work establishing friendly relations with the Hindu Rajas. This is the time to strike the blow"[1]. And, therefore, the blow fell on Malwa, the rich subah of the Mughal Empire which owing to the weak and vacillating policy of the Emperor's governors provided a happy hunting ground for Maratha ambition.

By the agreement of 1719, Maratha rights to collect *chauth* in Khandesh and Malwa were recognised. But now the Emperor refused to honour the commitment. Baji Rao, although anxious to assert Maratha supremacy in Malwa by force of arms, could not undertake a large-scale operation all of a sudden. During 1721 and 1722 the Peshwa was active in the Khandesh region collecting *chauth*. Early in February 1723 he crossed the Narmada, entered Nemar, the southern divisions of Malwa and proceeded to Dhar. He had a meeting near Jhabua with the Vazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk who was proceeding to Gujarat to punish the rebellious Haider Quli Khan. The Nizam seems to have sounded Baji Rao about his support, in case he (the Nizam) fell out with Delhi. Already the Nizam's position there was not very congenial. In December the Nizam resigned his Vazirship and marched south to establish his authority in the Deccan. On his way down south he met Baji Rao at Nalcha on the 18th May, 1724. At this meeting the Nizam solicited Baji Rao's help in his struggle with the Empire and agreed not to question the Maratha right to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six subahs of the Deccan. It was with Baji Rao's help that the Nizam won the battle of Shakar Khera (2nd October 1724). It resulted in the annihilation of Mubariz Khan and the triumphal entry of the Nizam into the Deccan.

During all these years of the Peshwa's incursions into Malwa territory, the Maratha Kamavishdars levied *chauth* from the southern districts. In these exploits Udaji Pawar,

[1] *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission 1940*, Vol. XVII, pp. 204-5

Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindia distinguished themselves. In 1724 the Peshwa granted to Udaji Pawar the *mokassa* dues of the districts of Dhar and Jhabua. In order to check this penetration of the Marathas into the imperial domain, the Emperor appointed in June 1725 Giridhar Bahadur, an able and accomplished soldier of the Mughal service, as the Subahdar of Malwa. His task was to oust the Marathas from Malwa. In this he was assisted by his cousin Daya Bahadur, the commander of the imperial troops. Daya Bahadur acted with alacrity and succeeded in preventing the Maratha officials from collecting *chauth*. In fact during 1726-27 the *chauth* collections of the Marathas were little. Thus Giridhar Bahadur and Daya Bahadur appeared to have restored Mughal authority once again in Malwa and to have driven out the Marathas.

Baji Rao could not devote all the attention which was necessary to establish Maratha supremacy on a firm basis in Malwa as he was engaged elsewhere. During 1725-27 he had to assist Fatehsingh Bhonsle in his attempt to establish Maratha claims in the Carnatic. Further the Nizam was giving a lot of trouble. It was only after the defeat of the Nizam at Palkhed in February 1728 that the Peshwa was free to turn his attention to Malwa. In Malwa itself the Maratha incursions were encouraged by Sawai Jai Singh of Amber and Nandalol Mandloi, an officer of the Mughal administration who had every reason to participate in the Maratha intrigues and plans to destroy the Mughal government in Malwa. Nandalol was a man of great influence and "held the hearts of all the chiefs (*sardars*) of Malwa in the clutches of his hand", and this man greatly facilitated the success of Baji Rao in Malwa.

According to Sir John Malcolm: "Thus invited by weakness and provoked by injury, we are not surprised to find that the Rajpoot princes and chiefs of Jeypoor, Mewar and Malwa so far from continuing to be the defence of the empire, were either secretly or openly the supporters of the Maratha invaders, to whose first invasion of Malwa, we are

told by every Persian or Hindu writer that notices the subject, hardly any opposition was given; and we possess many testimonies to show, that they chiefly attributed their success on this occasion to the action of religious feeling."[2] Although there may be some truth in this there is no doubt whatsoever that the dynamic policy of expansion enunciated by Peshwa Baji Rao necessitated military action in every weak quarter of the Mughal Empire to assert Maratha supremacy. Also the growing needs of the Maratha State demanded more resources and they could secure them only through aggrandizement. Malwa was rich and ill-governed and attracted the covetous eyes of Baji Rao.

In October 1728 Baji Rao gathered a most formidable force consisting of Udaji Pawar, Ranoji Sindia and Malhar Rao Holkar and commanded by Chimnaji Appa. After crossing the Satpura hills and fording the Narmada this great army encamped, towards the close of October, at Nalcha. The Subahdar, Giridhar Bahadur, had then reached Amjera after driving out Kanthaji Kadam who was pillaging the Malwa province from Gujarat. With him was also Daya Bahadur. The time was opportune for decisive action. The *Killadar* of the Mandu Fort, Muhammad Umar Khan must be prevented from joining Giridhar Bahadur. Leaving a small detachment for this purpose, Chimnaji Appa suddenly charged his forces on Giridhar Bahadur who was taken by surprise. The Mughal army was completely crushed and Giridhar Bahadur, Daya Bahadur and a number of chiefs were slain. This battle of Amjera which was fought on the 29th November 1728 was a great triumph for Chimnaji Appa and a tribute to his qualities of leadership and organization.

Not content with the destruction of the Mughal army Chimnaji proceeded to reduce Ujjain, the capital of Malwa. Baji Rao himself was anxious that his brother should pursue this plan. He wrote to Chimnaji: "I am

2 Sir John Malcolm: *Central India*, Vol. I. pp. 53-4

happy to learn the news of your victory at Amjera, which is due to the blessing of our master and our revered father. May God continue to grant you similar victories ever more. You must take forethought about the future. Press upon the capital Ujjain with all speed so as to obtain funds with which to pay the *Chhatrapati's* debts. I note what you say about the strenuous services rendered by Udaji Pawar and others. We rely upon them all for following up this first achievement with equal persistence. Convey to them all my congratulations and an assurance of our good intentions. You must in particular be very circumspect. Allow no slackness in discipline nor feel unduly elated by your success. Your first concern should be money and more money. We intend marching towards Bundelkhand via Chanda and Devgad". Ujjain was defended by Bhawani Ram, the son of Giridhar Bahadur. To his assistance the Emperor sent Syed Najmuddin Ali Khan, Durjan Sal Hada and Muhammad Umar Khan with considerable troops. Chimnaji could not press his victory against Ujjain due to lack of facilities and, therefore, had to abandon it. With his troops he moved over the country and collected *chauth* from several places. On the 4th May, 1729 Chimnaji returned to Poona. The net result of this campaign was that Maratha supremacy in Malwa was established, although a few places like Ujjain held out. Maratha collectors appeared everywhere.

It was realised in Delhi that unless a trained administrator was appointed to Malwa, Mughal authority could not be restored in that province. The choice fell on Jai Singh. But Jai Singh was aware that he could not recover what had been lost. He realised that to have peace in Malwa he should pursue a policy of appeasement of Maratha aspirations. His line of thinking was supported by Mir Bakshi Khan Dauran while the other party headed by Saadat Khan, Muhammad Khan Bangash and others wanted decisive action against the Marathas. Jai Singh proposed that an annual payment of ten lakhs should be made to the Mara-

thas for the *chauth* of Malwa and that Shahu should order his generals not to raid the Malwa territory. On his part in order to create a friendly atmosphere Raja Shahu restored to the Mughal authority the fort of Mandavgad captured by Udaji Pawar. In recommending to the Emperor his proposals Jai Singh observed: "You have been trying this game of driving away the Marathas from Malwa for the last twenty years. If you take into account what it has cost you and what success you have attained, I am sure my plan would appeal to you as the only way out of the difficulty." The Jai Singh plan did not appeal to the Emperor. Before the plenipotentiaries, Dado Bhimsen, Shahu Raja's envoy and Deep Singh, an eminent Rajput, could complete the negotiations the Imperial court at Delhi decided not to pursue the matter but to resist the Maratha demands. To this end Jai Singh was replaced in December 1730 by Muhammad Khan Bangash who was charged with the singular task of repulsing the Marathas from Malwa. The Mughal court thought he was well-equipped to meet the Maratha danger, he having had enough experience of the Marathas in Bundelkhand.

Muhammad Khan spent the year 1731 in reconquering the places taken by the Marathas. From Ujjain, Mandaleshwar, Dhar and Dipalpur the Marathas were expelled. It was then in April that a meeting took place between Muhammad Khan and Nizam-ul-Mulk near the Akbarpur ferry on the Narmada evidently to concert measures along with Trimbak Rao Dabhade to destroy the schemes of Baji Rao. This unholy combination was smashed by Baji Rao at Dabhoi (1st April 1731). With the death of Trimbak Rao Dabhade on the battlefield the grand design of Nizam-ul-Mulk and Muhammad Khan Bangash was shattered and they had to retreat to their capitals.

After the settlement of the Gujarat affairs the Marathas were free to concentrate all their attention on Malwa. Already the Peshwa's agents, Anand Rao Pawar and his cousins Tukoji and Jivaji Pawar, Malhar Rao Holkar and

Ranoji Sindia, were very active in strengthening the cause of the Marathas as desired by the Peshwa. Pawar, Holkar and Sindia were the founders of the great states of Dhar, Indore and Gwalior respectively. At this time it was reckoned that they had nearly one hundred thousand horses in the Malwa province. "Fateh Singh and others were posted with thirty thousand horses at Khimlasa, 42 miles east of Sironj, Chimnaji (Baji Rao's brother), Malhar and others with an equal number were in Umatwara, between the Kali Sind and Parbati rivers; twelve thousand were still south of the Narbada, another twelve thousand were coming up by way of Sagar". All the local Rajas flocked under the Marathas and would not lift a finger to assist Muhammad Khan. In this desperate state, Muhammad Khan approached Raja Shahu for negotiations but was directed to Baji Rao "who was his sole adviser". To restore Malwa from the clutches of the Marathas now appeared well-nigh impossible for Muhammad Bangash. No help came from Delhi and in fact an imperial firman from Muhammad Shah recalled Muhammad Khan to court and Jai Singh was appointed his successor. Muhammad Khan left Malwa and reached Agra on the 16th December 1732. Thus for a second time Muhammad Khan failed to cope with the Marathas.

Jai Singh did not make any serious attempt to oust the Marathas from Malwa. In fact the Marathas marched from victory to victory and within two years advanced to Gwalior and beyond it and completely removed all semblance of Mughal authority in Malwa. Sindia, Holkar and Pawar gave every imaginable trouble to Jai Singh. The Emperor was, no doubt, anxious to help Jai Singh and ordered noble after noble to march against the Marathas and stem their expansion into Malwa; but no one could or desired to make an effective stand against the growing threat to the Mughal subah. The Emperor himself decided to march in person. He left Delhi on the 23rd February 1733. The news of the Emperor's march to give succour to Jai Singh's forces im-

proved their morale. In the battle which ensued between Jai Singh and Holkar the former's forces were cut off and had to purchase peace by promising to pay Holkar 4 lakhs in cash and to cede 28 *parganahs* in lieu of *chauth.* The imperial camp could go only up to Faridabad. The Emperor returned to Delhi after spending a month on the banks of the Jamuna. Thereafter Qamar-ud-din Khan, the Vazir, offered to undertake the campaign. He was joined by Muhammad Khan Bangash at Agra. It was then that the Marathas were between Sironj and Marwar. The Vazir thought that no useful purpose would be served in advancing further and hastily retreated towards Delhi. And now the turn of Khan Dauran came. But he did not do anything except to ask someone to take his place. He sent his brother Muzaffar Khan against the Marathas but he could not achieve much. In the meantime the Marathas under Holkar, Sindia and Anand Rao Pawar attacked Bundi on April 22, 1734 and took it. This incursion of the Marathas into Rajputana made Jai Singh realise the danger. He hastily summoned a conference of the princes of Rajputana who signed an agreement to stand united against Maratha aggression in Rajputana. But nothing came out of the agreement for already the fate of Malwa and Rajputana had been decided by Baji Rao.

Subsequently two expeditions were arranged by the Imperialists against the Marathas. The first was led by Vazir Qamar-ud-din Khan against Pilaji Jadhav who was active in North Malwa assisted by the Peshwa's son Balaji. The Vazir left Delhi on the 20th November, 1734 and after passing Agra engaged Pilaji Jadhav in two or three encounters in which he had the advantage. Thereafter he returned to Delhi on the 21st May, 1735. The other expedition was led by Khan Dauran who was joined by Raja Jai Singh, Abhay Singh of Jodhput and Durjan Sal of Kotah. The combined army proceeded to Rampura where Holkar and Sindia were active. The Maratha soldiers surrounded the huge imperial army and cut off all supplies.

Thereafter they suddenly went into Kotah and Bundi and then to Jaipur and Jodhpur. On the 28th February, 1735 the Marathas plundered Sambar. The imperial army followed them but it was not productive of any result. Khan Dauran agreed with Jai Singh that they should negotiate with the Marathas and the Imperialists purchased peace by the offer of twenty-two lakhs as *chauth* from Malwa. Khan Dauran and Jai Singh returned to Delhi thereafter.

Thus by 1735 after two years of struggle Jai Singh was expelled by the Marathas from Malwa. Now they prepared themselves to advance into Gwalior and beyond. What Baji Rao desired and said to Shahu he would accomplish was now possible. With the reduction of Malwa with the help of his intrepid and trusted lieutenants Pawar, Holkar and Sindia, the heart of the Empire at Agra and Delhi was within the easy reach of the Peshwa. The great occasion had come. Already his name had filled the minds of his adversaries with fear and respect. It was now possible for his mother Radhabai to undertake a pilgrimage to the north Indian places of worship without the least fear and with all the facilities provided by Jai Singh and other Rājput princes and even by Muhammad Khan Bangash and other Mughal nobles. The lady left Poona on the 14th February, 1735, reached Burhanpur on the 8th March, crossed the Narmada (18th April) visited Udaipur (6th May), Nathwara and Jaipur in which last place she stayed for three months at the request of Jai Singh, travelled to Mathura, Brindaban, Kurukshetra and Prayag and reached Kasi on the 17th October. She returned to Poona on the 1st June, 1736. Throughout the journey the Rajput princes and the Mughal nobles vied with one another to make her journey as comfortable as possible. The following account by the Peshwa's agent at Jaipur is very interesting inasmuch as it reveals the great anxiety of the Rajputs and Mughals to please the Peshwa's mother and indirectly the Peshwa himself:

"The revered mother arrived at Jainagar at the beginning of Ashad under the care of Balaji Naik. She is being pressed to stay here till the *Dassera*, an event of special celebration. All things go well for her on account of her pious personality. The journey further will, I am sure, prove equally successful. Baji Rao's stars are most propitious and no harm can come to her. The Maharaj Jaisingh has deputed Ray Narayandas to accompany her throughout the journey. Narayandas' relation Ray Haraprasad is the Diwan of Muhammad Khan Bhangash, who entertains such high esteem for the Peshwa, that Ray Haraprasad came to meet us at the Jamuna and having escorted the party during the crossing took us for a visit to the Khan, his chief. The Khan expressed his hearty pleasure, that he was honoured by a cordial letter from Baji Rao and that he entrusted his mother to his care. 'She is to me' he says, 'just like my own mother.' He has sent orders round to his district officials to accord the party full reception through his territory. Haraprasad had brought her a present of Rs. 1,000/- in cash with saris of cloud-colour (suitable for a widow). Sawai Jaisingh too expressed his high and sincere regard for the Peshwa. The Rana of Udaipur did the same and has sent his agent Samant Singh to Poona on a special mission. Your very name has struck a reverential awe in the minds of these potentates"[3].

Jai Singh realised that there was no point in continuing the struggle and that the Emperor should come to an agreement with the Peshwa. On the other hand, the Emperor was furious over the failure of the repeated Mughal attempts to check the Marathas in their advance on Malwa and greatly resented what he considered an ignominious surrender on the part of Jai Singh and Khan Dauran in agreeing to pay the Peshwa a huge amount as *chauth* for Malwa. Many in the Mughal court told the Emperor that this in-

[3] Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. p. 148-9

glorious plight of the Imperialists was largely due to the bungling of Jai Singh and Khan Dauran who played second fiddle to Maratha aggression. Saadat Khan, the Governor of Oudh, in particular, was very bitter against the conduct of Jai Singh and declared to the Emperor: "Jai Singh has ruined the Empire by his secret support to the Marathas. Give me only the Governorship of Malwa and Agra. I do not ask for any monetary aid. Jai Singh may ask for one crore but I do not need it. The Nizam is my friend, he will hinder the Marathas from crossing the Narmada". There were several other nobles including Sarbuland Khan who joined Saadat Khan in censuring the conduct of Jai Singh. The Emperor fell an easy prey to this vicious campaign against Jai Singh. It was only Khan Dauran who could defend Jai Singh. He informed the Emperor that he should beware of the Saadat Khan-Nizam combination, that Baji Rao was always obedient to the Emperor and that by accepting his demands, peace in the imperial domains could be guaranteed. Undaunted by the murmur in the imperial court and determined to help Baji Rao to realise his demands, Jai Singh informed the Peshwa that he should come with Pilaji and other leading nobles to Jaipur for a settlement. Jai Singh promised to pay the *chauth* for Malwa, and also the dues from Sironji, Datia, Orcha and other states. He would also arrange for the Peshwa's interview with the Emperor, provided the latter gave all assurances for safe conduct. Otherwise Baji Rao may return to Poona from Jaipur and decide the issue.

Although Baji Rao was not very sanguine about Jai Singh's proposals for a meeting with the Emperor he was anxious to cultivate the friendship of the Rajput chiefs which might help him in his eventual dash on Delhi. Raja Shahu agreed to the Peshwa going north and in October, 1735 Baji Rao left Poona accompanied by his redoubtable generals, Holkar, Sindia and Pawar. The main army was sent ahead to Malwa and Bundelkhand while the Peshwa with a small force reached Udaipur in February 1736.

There he was received by the Rana with great enthusiasm and in a manner befitting the high position which the Peshwa occupied in the Rajput's mind.

In the meantime, the Emperor tried to push the Marathas away from Malwa by sending expeditionary forces under Saadat Khan, the Vazir and Khan Dauran. These could not achieve anything and peace with the Peshwa was the only alternative. Mahadev Bhat Hingne, the Peshwa's agent in Delhi, came to Jaipur (January 1736) and met Jai Singh. Jai Singh sent his minister Raja Ayamal to Baji Rao to request him to come to Jaipur for peace talks. Khan Dauran sent from Delhi Jinabat Ali Khan to negotiate on his behalf. All these transactions convinced the Emperor that he should follow suit. After ordering his generals to suspend all hostilities the Peshwa left Udaipur towards Jaipur. Baji Rao met Jai Singh at Bhamola, near Kishangad on the 4th March 1736. The meeting continued for several days when the peace terms and arrangements to meet the Emperor were discussed. Jai Singh agreed to pay 5 lakhs as *chauth* for Jaipur and promised to obtain written guarantee from the Emperor for Malwa. The Peshwa left for Sironj and waited for the Emperor's reply. Yadgar Kashmiri and Kirparam were sent by the Emperor to negotiate with Jai Singh. The Emperor agreed to the demands of the Peshwa and as suggested by Jai Singh appointed Baji Rao as the Deputy Governor of Malwa. "This was in effect though not in form a cession of the province"[4], and was the signal for the Peshwa to order his men to occupy the province. As was expected Malwa came under the charge of Ranoji Sindia, Pilaji Jadhav, Holkar, Anand Rao Pawar succeeded by his son Yeshwant Rao Pawar on the former's death, Tukoji Pawar and Jiwaji Pawar. Subsequently the Peshwa sent a consolidated list of his demands to the Emperor. He demanded the whole of Malwa in assignment which meant the removal of the Pathans from Bhopal, the control of the forts of Mandu, Dhar and Raisin; the grant in jagir of the whole tract south of the Chambal

with the appointment of faujdar, a payment of 50 lakhs in cash; a grant in jagir of Allahabad, Benares, Gaya and Mathura; and lastly the hereditary rights of a *sardeshpandya* in the six subahs of the Deccan. The Peshwa on his part agreed to go to Agra to meet the Emperor.

The Emperor could not agree, apart from conferring the deputy governorship of Malwa on Baji Rao, to any of these terms except the one relating to *sardeshpandya* in the six Deccan subahs. Even this incensed the Nizam. The Emperor was also not keen to meet the Peshwa. As such there was no other alternative for Baji Rao except to march on Delhi to convince the Emperor about the permanent annexation of Malwa to the Maratha Empire.

[4] Irvine: Later Mughals, Vol. II, p. 285

6

Bundelkhand

As the Maratha banner was being planted in Malwa by Chimnaji Appa and his intrepid soldiers, the Peshwa himself was busy in Bundelkhand, the land of the brave Bundelas. The rise of the Bundelas is a glorious chapter in Indian History. The Bundelas are a clan of the Rajputs. The word Bundela is attributed to the tutelary deity, Bindhbasini Devi, whose temple is stated to be at Bindhachal, an offshoot of the Vindhyan range. During the 13th and 14th centuries they conquered the territory between the Jumuna and the Narmada and established their sway. It was in 1531 A.D. that they formed their first independent state when Rudra Pratap established his capital at Orcha. However, one of Rudra Pratap's sons, Udyajit shifted his capital to Mahena, 23 miles from Orcha, and founded a new home. Not much is known about this dynasty except that Bir Singh Bundela, a grandson of Rudra Pratap, contrived the murder of Akbar's favourite minister, Abul Fazl. Akbar's son, Jehangir made no secret of his part in this affair. According to him: "The bearing of the Shaikh's family fully convinced me that if he were allowed to arrive at court he would do everything in his power to augment the indignation of my father against me. Under

this apprehension I negotiated with Bir Singh Dev. His country lay on the high road of the Shaikh from the Deccan. I sent him a message inviting him to annihilate Shaikh Abul Fazl on his journey with promises of favours and considerable reward. Bir Singh Dev agreed to do this and God rendered his aid to the success of the enterprise... his head was sent to me at Allahabad". Bir Singh was raised to the mansab of 3,000 horses. Jehangir considered Bir Singh "brave, kind-hearted and pure as any man of his age... the cause of his elevation was the murder of Abul Fazl."[1] Bir Singh became one of the most famous rulers of Orcha and during this period the Bundelas rose to great prominence. Under Bir Singh's sway the Orcha territory expanded and all western Bundelkhand was annexed. Bir Singh was not merely a warrior but a great builder too. The great palace-forts at Orcha and Datia and the Chaturbhuj temple testify to his greatness.

But when Shahjahan succeeded to the throne, the Bundelas had to leave the court. Jhujhar Singh, the son of the deceased Bir Singh, was relentlessly pursued by the Mughals and driven into Gondwana where he was killed in 1635 by the Gonds. The struggle against the Mughals was carried on by Champat Rai, the subordinate of Jhujhar Singh. Champat Rai was the originator of a new section of Bundela chiefs east of the Dhasan river, including Panna, Charkhari, Ajaigarh etc. "Champat Rai was the jagirdar of Mau Mahewa, being descended from Rao Udayajit the third son of Rudra Pratap whose descendants are always known as the *Dangahi* Bundelas, either from their general character for turbulence (danga, a row or disturbance) or from the trouble caused by Champat Rai and his more famous son, Chhatrasal.[2] After continuing the fight for more than two decades he was also murdered in 1661.

The story of his struggle along with his brother Sujan

[1] Elliot & Dowson : *History of India as Told by Her Own Historians*, Vol. VI, p. 288

[2] *Orchha State Gazetteer* : p. 31

Rai against the Mughals, is a heroic one. First Champat Rai made common cause with Prithvi Raj, one of the sons of Jhujhar Singh. The Mughal commander, Abdullah Khan Firuz Jang, was able to capture Prithvi Raj but Champat Rai escaped. Due to this, Abdullah Khan was replaced by Bhadur Khan Rohela who in turn was recalled and Abdullah Kan was made to continue the struggle with Champat Rai. Abdullah Khan could not achieve any great results in his attempts to put down Champat Rai. But the Mughal commander found in Raja Pahar Singh Bundela, the brother of the late Jhujhar Singh of Orcha, a ready friend who agreed to join him in his campaign against Champat Rai. Since the odds were now many Champat Rai made terms with Pahar Singh. However, this uneasy alliance could not continue. Champat Rai, it appears, sought service under Prince Aurangzib. In his struggles with his brothers, Champat Rai rendered useful service and was sent to Lahore. He did not stay there long. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by the struggle for the throne among the sons of Shahjahan, he escaped from Lahore with his son Angad and returned to Bundelkhand. The imperial court ordered Subhakaran, Raja of Datia, and Indarman, Raja of Orcha to put down Champat Rai.

From now on Champat Rai was pursued relentlessly. His brother Sujan Rai could not obtain any help from the Rani of Orcha. In fact his position became so dangerous that he preferred to commit suicide to being taken prisoner by the Rani of Orcha. The Mughal soldiers were after Champat Rai who sought refuge in Sahra. Sahib Rai Dhandera who was in charge of Sahra agreed to give Champat shelter. But he soon gave way and hatched a plot to murder Champat Rai. One day after sending their son Chhatrasal to his uncle's house, Champat Rai and his wife Kali Kunwar escorted by two hundred Dhandera horsemen left Sahra for some other place of safety. Hardly had they gone a few miles when the Dhandera horsemen

suddenly fell upon Champat Rai and slew him. His wife who attempted to help her husband was also killed. Thus Champat Rai fell a victim to the machinations of the Dhandera chieftain. The ruler of Orcha if he had wanted might have helped Champat Rai in his attempt to create an independent state. But he chose to curry the favour of the Mughals and sacrificed one of the most valiant sons of Bundelkhand.

Champat Rai's young and orphaned son Chhatrasal was left without guidance and became a fugitive even at the age of twelve. It was now that Raja Jai Singh of Amber was employed by Emperor Aurangzib in his campaigns in the Deccan and against Shivaji. Chhatrasal and his brother Angad Rai joined service under Jai Singh in which they did well. Thereafter, Jai Singh sent Chhatrasal to help Bahadur Khan in his attempt to capture the fortress of Deogarh. But Bahadur Khan could not appreciate the services of Chhatrasal. So the latter had to find an alternative. He had heard of the rise of the great Shivaji who was now at the height of glory in Maharashtra and had become the protector of the people harassed by the Mughals. To Shivaji young Chhatrasal went for succour and advice.[3] Shivaji counselled Chhatrasal that he should repair to Bundelkhand and there raise the banner of revolt against the Mughals. Chhatrasal followed the plan chalked out by Shivaji. The time was most propitious for him to carve out an independent kingdom. The long and expensive wars which Emperor Aurangzib waged in the south and the struggle for power which ensued his death enabled Chhatrasal to establish in eastern Bundelkhand an independent kingdom for himself.

During these sixty years from 1671, when he crossed the Narmada into Bundelkhand, to 1731 when he died, Raja Chhatrasal waged several relentless campaigns and defeated the Mughal generals sent against him such as Hashim Khan,

[3] Pogson: *A History of the Boondelas*, p. 52

Sayyid Bahadur, Randaula Khan, Tahavvar Khan, Sayyid Latif, Anwar Khan, Mirza Sadar-ud-din, Hamid Khan, Abdus Samad Khan and Murad Khan. The troubled state of the Empire assisted Raja Chhatrasal to establish his independence. Once for a few years (1696–1701) he entered imperial service but thereafter he returned to Bundelkhand. When Aurangzib died on the 20th February, 1707 and was succeeded by Bahadur Shah, the sons of Chhatrasal received mansabs. During the Mughal campaigns against Banda Bahadur who succeeded Guru Gobind Singh, Chhatrasal participated in the assault on the Sikh fortress of Lohgarh in the outer Himalayas. Emperor Faruksiyar also showed great consideration to Chhatrasal and his sons.

The activities of Chhatrasal to expand the Bundela dominion were resented by the Mughal subahdar of Allahabad, Muhammad Khan Bangash, an intrepid general who became the general of the Nawabs of Farukkabad. Bundelkhand had been included in the subah of Allahabad and therefore Bangash directed his energies to assert Mughal authority there and drive out Chhatrasal. He began his campaign against Chhatrasal early in 1727. Slowly he occupied the parganas of Bhind, Mauda, Pailani, Agwasi and Simani. At Ijoli, in the pargana of Mahoba he broke through the Bundela defences on the 22nd May, 1727 and forced them to retire. The Bundelas got scattered and sought shelter in the fort of Mahoba. Chhatrasal himself with his sons and grandsons remained in the Salhat forest, near Jaitpur. The forts of Barigad, Lauri, Jhumar, Mahoba and Kulpahar were reduced one after the other. Chhatrasal was confined to Jaitpur which was invested by Bangash in June 1728. During the subsequent months the siege continued with great vigour. Chhatrasal appealed to the Marathas several times. But the Marathas were fully occupied at the time. Neither the Peshwa nor Chimnaji Appa could come to Raja Chhatrasal's help. The Peshwa was engaged in a deadly conflict with the Nizam during the early months of 1728. It was only after his victory over

the Nizam at Palked (February, 1728) and the signing of the treaty of Mungi Shevgaon (March, 1728) that Baji Rao could release any of the forces or pay attention to other matters. But then Khandesh and Malwa claimed his attention. There Chimnaji was sent with Udaji Pawar to assert Maratha supremacy. Chimnaji's victory over Giridhar Bahadur at Amjera took him on to the siege of Ujjain. Due to these circumstances Baji Rao could not immediately respond to Raja Chhatrasal's appeals for succour. In December, 1728, Chhatrasal surrendered Jaitpur to the enemy along with himself and his family. Muhammad Khan Bangash established himself at Jaitpur but his troubles only commenced. Baji Rao was in Devgad when he heard the desperate position of Chhatrasal. Early in January, 1729 he wrote to Chimnaji not to waste his time and energy on Ujjain alone as there were other places of importance also. He told him that he would be proceeding to Bundelkhand to relieve Chhatrasal from his plight. In February, 1729, when the Peshwa was in Gorha, Chhatrasal sent his emissaries again to come to his assistance without a moment's delay. Chhatrasal's appeal to Baji Rao was said to have been couched in these words : " Know you Baji Rao, that I am in that same sad plight in which the famous elephant was when caught by the crocodile. My valiant race is on the point of extinction. Come and save my honour ". Baji Rao at once informed Chimnaji that he was proceeding to the succour of Chhatrasal.

With 25,000 horsemen the Peshwa pushed on towards Bundelkhand. Early in March, 1729 he established his contacts with the Bundela chiefs. On the 12th March at Mahoba, Raja Chhatrasal's son met the Peshwa. Chhatrasal himself contrived to escape from his confinement and met the Peshwa the next day. Baji Rao now closed on Muhammad Khan Bangash and completely cut off all supplies to the Mughal commander and his troops. In this desperate situation Bangash sent frantic appeals to the Emperor to send reinforcements. He also asked his son Qaim

Khan to come to his help. But the Maratha soldiers successfully prevented Qaim Khan from joining his father's forces by effectively routing him near Jaitpur. Muhammad Khan realised that further delay in surrendering to Baji Rao would only greatly harm his position. He, therefore, agreed to evacuate Jaitpur and never again return to Bundelkhand or give trouble to Chhatrasal. This was a great victory to Baji Rao. It was also a personal triumph for Chhatrasal. The failure of the Emperor to send troops to Muhammad Khan Bangash "the bravest and most spirited of the Mughal nobles of his time" in his hour of need resulted in the loss to the Empire of Bundelkhand. All that the Emperor could do was to replace Muhammad Khan by Sarbuland Khan to the government of Allahabad.

Raja Chhatrasal was not willing to allow Baji Rao to go unrewarded for the great help rendered to himself and his dynasty. Several gifts were given to the Peshwa and he was requested to look upon Chhatrasal's two sons Hirdesa and Jagatraj as his own brothers and protect them if needed. Chhatrasal also assigned out of his dominions a large jagir to Baji Rao. To crown all this Chhatrasal presented to Baji Rao his young and alluring daughter, Mastani who came to exercise a tremendous influence on the Peshwa in later years. Baji Rao left Jaitpur for Poona with Mastani on the 23rd May, 1729.

Raja Chhatrasal died on the 14th December, 1731 at the age of eighty two. Chhatrasal Bundela was a great soldier, an able administrator and a constructive ruler who welded together the scattered elements of the Bundela race and established an independent kingdom. It was not merely his courage and bravery but his generosity, his scholarship, his eclectic mind, and above all his sense of justice that add lustre to the unimpeachable character of this great Bundela. No doubt in his epic struggle with the Mughals and the tenacity with which he fought to defend his independence he was greatly influenced by the example of Shivaji and the great Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath and his more

famous son Baji Rao. But it will not be incorrect to say that the revolt which he engineered in Bundelkhand and kept going for over forty years greatly facilitated the rapid disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

The will of Raja Chhatrasal gave to his eldest son Hirdesa, territories yielding a revenue of 42 lakhs. Panna, Kalinjar, Mhow, Irich and Dhamoni came under his control. Jagatraj, the second son of Chhatrasal, received Jaitpur, Ajayagad, Charkari Banda, and Bijawar which gave him a revenue of 36 lakhs. Chhatrasal bequeathed to Peshwa Baji Rao Kalpi, Sagar, Jhansi, Sironj and Hardenagar which yielded a revenue of 33 lakhs. The will further stated that with the exception of expeditions beyond the Jumuna or the Chambal, both brothers (i.e., Hirdesa and Jagatraj) should join Baji Rao Sahib in every campaign and should share in the plunder and conquered lands in proportion to the troops provided by them, that if Baji Rao should be involved in Deccan warfare, the two brothers should defend for at least two months the frontiers of Bundelkhand and that as King Chhatrasal had looked upon Baji Rao as his son, Baji Rao must therefore guard Chhatrasal's sons as if they were his blood brothers.[4] The Peshwa appointed his own trusted agent, Govindpant, as the Governor of the new possessions. The Peshwa's penetration into Bundelkhand extended further the frontiers of the Maratha kingdom and served as a base for the concentration of Maratha forces and their advance into the imperial domains.

Mastani also came with Baji Rao to Poona. By all accounts she was a most beautiful woman and quite naturally this Indian Salome won the heart of the young Peshwa. The origin of Mastani is not very clear. One story is that she was a courtesan at the darbar of Shahajat Khan, a Muslim sardar employed in central India. It seems that Chimnaji Appa who found her attempting to commit suicide by taking poison persuaded her not to do

[4] Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, pp. 450-1 (Appendix)

so and assured her that Baji Rao would accept her as his mistress. It is inconceivable that a brother of the type of Chimnaji Appa could ever think of making such a present to Baji Rao. This story should therefore be considered as not plausible. There is a second theory that Mastani was the daughter of the Nizam and that she was given to Baji Rao by the Nizam in order to cultivate his friendship. But the most reliable theory is that Mastani was the daughter of Raja Chhatrasal by a Musulman mistress. He gave her to Baji Rao as a token of his gratitude to the Peshwa's timely help.

In an orthodox family like the Peshwa's the entry of Mastani naturally created trouble and the Peshwa's infatuation for her was an additional cause for family misunderstanding. Baji Rao's own wife Kashi Bai was a kind-hearted and dutiful lady. However, the Peshwa's mother Radha Bai and Chimnaji Appa, aware of the delicate situation created by the presence of Mastani, had had to impress on the Peshwa about the need to abandon Mastani. But the Peshwa paid little heed to these family rumblings. In 1734 Mastani bore a son to Baji Rao. He was named Shamsher Bahadur. The birth of Shamsher somewhat thawed the icy coldness of the Peshwa's family towards Mastani and in the year 1736, the Peshwa added a new apartment to the Shaniwar Palace solely for the use of Mastani. In fact it came to be that the distinction made between Kashi Bai and Mastani ceased to exist.

It was Baji Rao's ardent desire that his son by Mastani should be brought up as a Brahmin. But then the priesthood would not agree that this boy could be invested with the holy thread. So Shamsher Bahadur was brought up in his mother's faith. The Peshwa assigned to Shamsher Bahadur a portion of his share of Bundelkhand and this consisted of Banda and Kalpi. Shamsher was a courageous soldier and fell fighting bravely on the field of Panipat (1761) along with the other Maratha heroes. His son Ali Bahadur established himself in the ancestral home at Bundelkhand



MASTANI

Courtesy, Museum and Picture Gallery, Baroda

and became the ancestor of the Nawabs of Banda.[5]

Mastani accompanied the Peshwa in his expeditions.[6] She went with him to Delhi when the Peshwa made his great dash on that city in the summer of 1737. There was also peace at home for a time and the presence of a Muslim did not disturb family affections. As she was a *kanchani*, her dancing and singing were the chief attractions during the annual Ganapati festival held by the Peshwa. Her great charm, intellect and beauty completely captured the young Peshwa who spent most of his spare time in her company. Mastani was equally attached to her lover. She was prepared to undergo any ordeal to keep alive her love for the Peshwa. But the path of true love never runs smooth. And in the case of Baji Rao his attachment to Mastani was an eyesore to his relatives. All were waiting for an opportune time to separate Mastani from Baji Rao.

5 The Nawab of Banda, true to his ancestry fought side by side with the Peshwa and the Rani of Jhansi in the battle of Kalpi in 1858.
Surendranath Sen : *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, p. 289

6 According to the *Tarikh-i-Muhammadshahi* Mastani " was a *kanchani* (a dancing gril) skilled in riding and handling the sword and spear. She always accompanied Baji Rao in his campaigns and rode stirrup to stirrup with him."

7

Janjira Campaign

WHILE THE MARATHA arms successfully penetrated into Gujarat and Malwa, the progress in the fertile strip of territory between the Ghats and the sea known as Konkan, stretching from Daman to Goa, was very slow. Here were concentrated three rival powers — the Angres of Kolaba, the Sidis of Janjira and the Portuguese. Shivaji very early realised that the creation of a navy was an indispensable necessity to save his coastal provinces from the depredations of the Abyssinian pirates. He knew that from the sea fortress of Janjira the Sidis set out on their plundering expeditions. "Janjira is a sea-girt fortress, impregnable, difficult to be forced to surrender. I must have it. I must create sea power". This was Shivaji's aim. Maratha expansion in the Konkan naturally brought them into contact with the Portuguese who then held Daman, Bassein and the island of Salsette in the north and the settlement of Goa in the south, the English who had factories in Surat and Bombay, the Sidis of Janjira and the Dutch. From the east coast of Africa came the Sidis who were much prized and employed in large numbers by the Deccan sultanates. When Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar captured Janjira in

1490, he appointed an Abyssinian Sidi as its Governor. In course of time the Sidi of Janjira controlled the entire seaboard from Nagothana to Bankot.

To capture Janjira several measures were taken by Shivaji. The shallow ports of Pen, Panvel, Kalyan and Bhiwandi were developed for building small crafts and in course of time Shivaji's fleet consisted of 400 ships. But during his life time the Maratha navy did not obtain any spectacular victory. Further, the Sidi's alliance with the Mughals who accepted him as their admiral greatly added to his strength in his fight with Shivaji. During the reign of Sambhaji conditions deteriorated considerably and the Sidis extended their depredations on to the Maratha mainland. They were assisted in that enterprise by the crafty Emperor Aurangzib who now directed the energies of the Empire for the destruction of the Maratha power and had vowed that he would not return to Delhi until "he had seen Sambhaji's bleeding head weltering at his feet".

Indeed Aurangzib realised his ambition. Sambhaji and his minister Kavi Kulesh were captured and cruelly put to death (March, 1689), Raigarh the Maratha capital was captured and Rajaram fled to Gingee. There was thus great chaos in the Maratha homeland. It was during these troublous days that Kanhoji Angre kept the spirit of the Maratha navy daringly[1] and thwarted the ambitious schemes of the Sidis. Kanhoji Angre was the son of Tukoji Sankhapal, a sailor in Shivaji's fleet who was posted to the naval station of Suvarnadurg. Under his father's guidance Kanhoji received practical instructions in seamanship. He first made his mark when he saved Suvarnadurg from falling into the hands of the Sidis and drove them out. For this act of bravery he was appointed second in command, Sidoji

[1] "A most daring corsair, he attacked vessels of all nations, ravaging the coasts and leaving unmolested few trading towns from Travankor to Bombay."

Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Vol. X. *Ratnagiri and Sawantwadi*, p. 195

Gujar being the then admiral of the Maratha fleet. On Sidoji's death in 1698 Rajaram conferred on Kanhoji the post and title of *Sarkhel* (admiral).

He had a difficult task to perform and the general calamity that had come upon the Maratha empire heavily handicapped him. With the execution of Sambhaji, in 1689, the disintegrating elements exhibited themselves thus affording an opportunity for the Sidis to extend their territorial limits into the interior. The grand design of Kanhoji was to drive the Sidis and get back the lost territories as well as to rehabilitate Maratha influence and restore their power and supremacy. To achieve this he had to face not only the hostility of the Sidis, but also the organized attempts of the western powers (the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch) to thwart his ambitious scheme in order to safeguard their commercial interests. But Kanhoji knew how to deal with them.

It was the Sidi who first felt Angre's wrath, and between 1700 and 1701 due to various defeats, the Sidi had agreed to yield to his opponent two-thirds of the revenue of Kolaba, Khanderi and Sangargarh and part of the revenue of Chaul. He next turned his attention to the westerners, and every one of them experienced the avenging hand of Kanhoji. A small trading vessel from Calicut carrying six Englishmen was captured by him in 1702. To the letters of the English merchants complaining about his activities he returned a defiant answer. In 1707 Angre's ships blew to pieces the Bombay frigate. In 1710 he captured a Dutch ship and in 1711 the Bombay Governor's armed yacht fell into his hands.

The troubled politics of Maharashtra at that time, due to the civil war between Shahu and Tarabai, and due to the desertion of Shahu's adherents, gave much scope for Kanhoji, a partisan of Tarabai to plunder Shahu's dominions. But he was soon won over to the side of Shahu by the diplomacy and genius of Balaji Vishwanath, the new Peshwa. As a result of the treaty concluded in 1714 Angre

acknowledged allegiance to Shahu and was confirmed as the commander of the Maratha fleet. This new *entente* proved more than a match to the forces of Sidi who surrendered valuable territories to Kanhoji.

From now till his death in 1729 he continued to be a tower of strength to his master and proved a terror to the western powers settled near his base of operations. The English had a long and arduous fight with Kanhoji only to realise in the end his supremacy and skill as an admiral. In 1718 war broke out between Kanhoji and the English as a result of the capture of three English merchantmen by the former for which the English retaliated by seizing one of Angre's ships. The English contemplated an attack on Kanhoji's stronghold Vijaydurg, whose fortified position defied their assaults. Its high rocks and the stormy seas which surrounded it made landing impossible, while the shells discharged had no effect. Even when all troops landed they had no success and as the English retreated they suffered much due to firing from the castle. Undaunted by the failure, the English now directed their attacks on Khanderi, which belonged to Angre. As the sea round Khanderi was full of rocky shoals, the shots discharged by the English fell on the sea, while the indiscipline and cowardice of some contributed to the disaster. After a fruitless bombardment the squadron returned to Bombay. Another attempt on Vijaydurg also failed.

Angre's authority was unquestioned. The total discomfiture of the English enhanced his greatness, while Shahu Maharaj was gratified. But the English could never reconcile themselves to a sense of defeat and tried their utmost to rehabilitate their lost reputation. The Portuguese also had suffered at the hands of Angre and the wrath of the two disgruntled nations culminated in a rapproachement in 1721 by which they agreed to make a joint attack on Kolaba. Kanhoji, alive to the new danger which threatened him, appealed to Shahu for succour which was readily given. It was arranged that the Portuguese should protect

the camp against the enemy while the English should assault the fort. When the fort was attacked by the English, Baji Rao the Peshwa engaged the Portuguese and completely routed them. The stones and shots discharged from the fort wrought havoc among the English. Never was failure so complete; the allies blamed one another for the disaster.

The year 1722 marked the apogee of Kanhoji's career. He was the great admiral and the master spirit in the maritime activity of the Marathas. His enemies realised his greatness and as long as he lived dared not incur his wrath. With his dark and awe-inspiring personality, Kanhoji was severe in his commands and conspicuous for his thoroughness.[2] In fact he may be regarded as one of the greatest sailors India had ever produced. In 1724 the Dutch attacked Vijaydurg with a large naval force. They too failed and "the stout old Maratha admiral, victorious alike over English, Dutch and Portuguese sailed the Arabian Sea in triumph."

Although the attempts of the western powers to dislodge the Marathas from the sea coast were frustrated by Kanhoji Angre, the troubles from the Sidis were mounting. The Sidis had greatly assisted Aurangzib in his campaign in Maharashtra. As a token of his appreciation for the help rendered and as a crowning event in his attempt to destroy the Maratha power, the Emperor bestowed on the Sidis the possession of Raigarh, Mahad, Dabhol and other strongholds along the Konkan coast. Raigarh especially was the capital of Shivaji. It was the seat and symbol of Maratha sovereignty and its possession by the Sidis greatly incensed the Marathas. These strained relations came to a head when one of the Sidis, Sidi Sat, the Governor of Gowalkot and Anjanwel, quarrelled with Brahmendraswami who was looked upon as a second Ramdas by the Marathas. To Shahu and his contemporaries Brahmendraswami pro-

2 "He was full-faced with a sparkling eye and countenance" well-set and corpulent and "qute the opposite of the fair, lean and wiry Shivaji." *Kolaba District Gazetteer*, p. 149

vided the same spiritual outlook which Ramdas gave to Shivaji. The grandeur of his saintly personality inspired his followers while Shahu and his wives, Kanhoji Angre, the Sidi of Janjira, Balaji Vishwanath, Baji Rao and Chimnaji spared no pains to carry out his orders in order to give him the utmost satisfaction.

Brahmendraswami's early name was Vishnu. He was the son of a Deshasth Brahman of Berar, Mahadev Bhat by name and his wife Umabai. Even as a young boy he was of a contemplative turn of mind and was most devoted to the worship of god Ganesa. Losing his parents at the young age of twelve, he went to Banaras in 1663, and there taking up the life of a *Sanyasi* assumed the attractive title of *Brahmendraswami.* From that day onwards he changed his religious affiliation to god Vishnu and travelled the length and breadth of India visiting holy shrines. Finally, arriving at Maharashtra, he settled down in the village of Parasuram, where existed a temple devoted to god Parasuram. In order to obtain eternal bliss he used to retire very often to the beautiful wood nearby and meditate in all tranquillity.

His august personality and the ceremonies which he performed attracted the villagers nearby. Very soon his fame spread outside. The austerity of such a man attracted the attention of Balaji Vishwanath who later became the Peshwa.

Brahmendraswami's influence grew as the years rolled on. His fame was not confined to his co-religionists alone, for the chief of the Sidis of Janjira, Rasul Yakut Khan with all reverence to the saint, granted him two villages.

The region round Konkan was a perennial battleground for the ambitious schemes of the Portuguese, the Sidis of Janjira, and the Angres. It was Baji Rao's ardent desire to subdue this part and he succeeded in his attempt. It was rightly considered by the Marathas that the defeat and destruction of the power of the Sidis and the Portuguese could not have been achieved if Brahmendraswami had not blessed the expeditions that were led against them.

The circumstances which led to the submission of the Sidi were very interesting. The Governor of Gowalkot, Sidi Sat had requested Brahmendraswami to bring the elephant presented to him by the Raja of Savanoor, and when the animal was brought from the place to the borders of Konkan, the Swami thinking that it would reach the Sidi's place safely, left it. But the animal had to pass through the territory of Kanhoji Angre, the Maratha admiral, and his men refused passage. Sidi Sat was incensed over this and suspecting the complicity of the Swami in the affair came upon the village of Parasuram and on Mahasivaratri day in February 1727 he destroyed its temple.

This ignoble act of the Sidi broke the heart of the Swami. In agony he swore thus: "You have wrought evil on the gods and the Brahmins; just revenge may they wreak on you. Never will I live, nor take a drop of water to drink in a land where the faithless foreigners rule. I will re-enter Konkan again but at the head of avenging Hindu forces." So saying the Swami went to Satara and there urged Shahu to conduct a religious war on the Sidis and exterminate them root and branch for their sacrilegious action.[3]

Brahmendraswami's appeal could not be easily attended to, as the Peshwa was busy with his struggle against the Nizam. It was only when the Nizam was defeated at Palkhed (1728) and was forced to give up his support to the Kolhapur party that the Peshwa was free to give his attention to the conquest of the Konkan. On the death of Kanhoji Angre in 1729, his eldest son Sekhoji Angre succeeded him to the office of High Admiral. Sekhoji by all accounts was a man of exceptional ability and talents and was will-

[3] "In 1728 the infuriated anchorite shook from off his feet the dust of the Konkan and, ascending the ghats, went to live in Dhavadshi. There he was cordially welcomed by Shahu, his queen and the Maratha nobles. Until the end of his life he never ceased to preach a crusade against the Abyssinians and to urge on the king the disgrace of their presence on the shores of his kingdom."—

Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 253

ing to throw his lot with the attempts of the Peshwa to dislodge the Sidi from the strongholds in the Konkan. At this time the Sidi had, with Janjira as the centre of power, the entire Kolaba District with the exception of Pen and Alibag taluks; Chiplun and Anjanwel in the south were also under his control including Raigarh, the capital of Shivaji. He had also repudiated the treaty with Kanhoji Angre and ravaged Sekhoji's territories. All these factors culminated in a general move in Satara for the early conquest of Konkan. Early in February 1732, Baji Rao visited Alibag and in April, Sekhoji had been there. Any possible trouble from the Nizam was also eliminated by the understanding arrived at between Baji Rao and the Nizam in December, 1732. The Maratha plan for the conquest of Janjira was further strengthened by the death early in 1733 of Sidi Rasul Yakut Khan and the consequent rivalry among his sons Abdulla, Sambul, Ambar, Rahyan, Yakut and Hasan for the throne. The eldest son Abdulla was murdered and his son Abdul Rahman sought the help of the Marathas in his bid for the island throne. The Marathas took advantage of the opportunity and two armies one under the Peshwa and the other under the Pratinidhi marched into the Konkan. The Peshwa's plan was to surprise the enemy. The response from Sekhoji Angre was not encouraging as he considered the time of the expedition inappropriate due to the monsoon. After capturing Rajpuri and Khokri the Peshwa camped at Bola Roza at Rajpuri to supervise the siege operations against Janjira. The Peshwa's plan was to conduct operations against Janjira both from land and sea and in this strategy he was assisted by Shekhji, the Sidi's confidant who had deserted his master's camp to the Marathas. It was no easy task to take Janjira because of its situation. "The fortified island of Janjira lies just within the entrance of the Rajpuri creek, the mainland being half a mile distant to the east and a mile to the west. In shape it is irregularly oval and is girt by walls which at high tide rise abruptly from the

water to a height of from forty-five to fifty feet. On the east side opposite Rajpuri is a large and handsome gateway with steps leading to the water and on the west facing the open sea a small postern gate. The walls are battlemented, strongly loopholed and have their faces covered with nineteen bastions eight feet across and thirty feet deep, at intervals of about 90 feet."[4]

Further, neither Sekhoji the Maratha admiral nor Shekhji the renegade Sidi could be of help. Baji Rao realised that more reinforcements were necessary to effectively carry out the blockade of Janjira both by land and sea.

While the Peshwa was feeling restless in Rajpuri another force under the Pratinidhi succeeded in capturing Raigarh on June 8, 1733 from the Sidis. This was a significant success for the Pratinidhi and was hailed by Shahu and the Maratha court. The Peshwa, of course, could not reconcile himself to the Pratinidhi's success, and the hostility between the two rivals made it impossible to have any concerted action againt the enemy. However, Sekhoji Angre assisted by the Peshwa's troops was able to capture from the Sidis Thal and Rewas, but could not take the island of Underi as the British decided "to use their utmost endeavour to prevent the island and fortress of Underi from falling into the enemy's hands by succouring the same." Consequently, the English took the island and hoisted their flag on the 16th July, 1733. The British action was prompted by the desire to protect their trade in western waters as they thought that if Underi fell into the hands of Sekhoji who already possessed Rewas, Thal and Khanderi, the Company's trade would be put to great jeopardy by Angre's gallivats.

The fortunes which attended the army under the Pratinidhi were no better. His attempts to capture the Sidi's strongholds of Anjanwel and Gowalkot did not succeed. Further, the embittered relations between the Peshwa and the Pratinidhi completely ruled out any concerted action.

[4] *Kolaba District Gazetteer*, p. 462

On the top of all this, Sekhoji Angre died on the 28th August, 1733, and with him all hopes of a speedy conquest of Janjira from the Sidi receded. There was little love lost between Sambhaji who succeeded Sekhoji Angre and the Peshwa, the former even refusing to meet Baji Rao for a discussion regarding the siege of Janjira. Without the help of the Angre and his fleet the port of Janjira could not be taken. While Angre temporised, the British sent help to the Sidis. In this plight Baji Rao informed the Maharaja that the best course would be to open negotiations with the Sidis. Shahu agreed to this and according to the truce agreement the Marathas kept all the lands wrested by them, namely, Raigarh, Thal, Rewas and Chaul while the Sidi's territories were restricted to Janjira, Underi, Anjanwel and Gowalkot. Further, the Peshwa's nominee Abdul Rahman was made the new Sidi of Janjira.

Although truce was declared the Sidi was not willing to allow the Marathas to occupy the areas which previously belonged to him. The Peshwa left Rajpuri for Satara. This was the signal for the Sidi to attack and regain the lost possessions. Sidi Sat and Sidi Masud very soon captured Bankot and Mahad from the Angre and Maratha forces. They also sent a detachment to besiege Raigarh. This news greatly disturbed Maharaja Shahu and he sent a strong force to the relief of Raigarh.[5] This force completely destroyed the Sidi detachment on the 10th June, 1734 and saved Raigarh. The Maharaja placed a strong garrison to protect Raigarh from further incursions from

[5] According to the Company's letter dated 1st Feb., 1734 to the Court of Directors :

" On the news of the Sidi's success against Bankot and Mahad reaching the Rajah's court the Peshwa was severely censured for his hasty retreat out of the Sidi's territory and he was ordered to march back with his army. On this Baji Rao wrote the President a letter complaining of the Sidi's impatience and restiveness in the enterprise while he was endeavouring to bring the Rajah to consent to an accommodation and he desired the President to prevail with the Sidis to lay aside the thought of besieging the fortress. "

the Sidi. This success was followed up by the capture of Mahad and Bankot. The retreating Sidi Sat realised the dangers to his twin strongholds of Gowalkot and Anjanwel, and prepared to withstand the Maratha onslaught. To Maratha sentiment the conquest of these two strongholds from the Sidi was very important as by that action alone could the destruction of the Parasuram temple by the Sidi be avenged.

But then precious time was wasted due to lack of united action on the part of the Marathas and by the struggle for power between the Angre brothers, Sambhaji, Manaji and Tulaji after the death of Sekhoji Angre. Consequently during 1734 and 1735 the Maratha siege of Gowalkot and Anjanwel was neither concerted nor purposeful. Taking advantage of this position Sidi Sat sallied out of his fortress of Anjanwel in a bid to reconquer the lost territories. He was able to detach Sambhaji Angre who offered his co-operation in the Sidi's attempt. Slowly Sidi Sat reoccupied Bankot in December 1735 and furthered his plans to recover Rewas, Thal and other places taken by the Marathas in 1733. By a sudden attack the Sidi captured Rewas (1736) and the coast was clear for the fall of Kolaba and the stronghold of Manaji Angre. The position was very critical and it appeared to the Peshwa and to his brother Chimnaji Appa no less to Maharaj Shahu that unless reinforcements poured into the Konkan to protect Manaji Angre and prevent Kolaba from falling into the hands of the Sidi, the Maratha cause in that area would be lost for ever. And so urged by Shahu and determined to save the situation, the Peshwa's brother Chimnaji Appa suddenly appeared with a picked force near Rewas where the Sidi was camping. Sidi Sat was totally ignorant of Chimnaji's approach and thinking that the contingent was one of Manaji's attacked it with a view to destroy the Angrian power once and for all. The intrepid Chimnaji dextrously handled the situation and in the bloody battles that were fought in the villages of Charegaum and Kamarlen (19th

April, 1736) completely destroyed the Sidi's force of about 1,500 men.[6] In the battle Sidi Sat and his brave captains Sidi Yakut and Subhanji Ghatge were also killed. The destruction of Sidi Sat, the despoiler of the temple of Parasuram, was greatly acclaimed in Satara by the King and the populace. Although Sidi Sat was defeated and slain his strongholds Anjanwel and Gowalkot continued to defy Maratha onslaughts. The army under Pilaji Jadhav could not reduce Gowalkot. It was considered that the best thing that could be done under the circumstances was to conclude a peace treaty with the Sidis of Janjira who were anxious for an agreement. According to the agreement entered into on the 25th September, 1736 the Sidi's power was restricted to the island of Janjira and to Anjanwel and Gowalkot on the mainland. The last two were captured by Tulaji Angre several years after.[7]

Thus after three years of arduous struggle amidst the intrigues of the enemy and foreign complicity, the Marathas were able to push back the Janjira pirates into the sea and protect the Konkan from being outrun by them. The task was not an easy one because the operations had to be conducted against well-equipped fortresses controlled by a cun-

6 According to Kincaid: "On April 19, a battle was fought at the village of Charai near Rewas. In it the Sidi was defeated and slain. With him fell the commandant of Underi and eleven thousand men. Shahu was overjoyed and he wrote to Chimnaji Appa: 'Sat Sidi was a demon no less than Ravana; by killing him you have uprooted the Sidis. Everywhere your fame is spread abroad.' Summoning to his court the young general, he showered on him presents and robes of honour. Brahmendraswami was equally lavish in his encomiums and until his death in 1745, he drived from his enemy's downfall a great and pious satisfaction."
Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha people*, pp. 255–6

7 "Anjanwel and Gowalkot alone remained as their mainland posts and came to be captured much later by Tulaji Angre in January 1745, so that Brahmendraswami could have a happy death in 1746 after seeing his wrongs fully avenged. His temple of Parashuram still commemorates his life's endeavour in its pristine grandeur. These Konkan regions were looked upon by the Peshwas as their homeland and were always dearest to their heart even during their distant wanderings."
G. S. Sardesai: *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 140

ning and daring enemy. Perhaps success would have attended the Marathas in much quicker time if both the Peshwa and the Pratinidhi had not carried their personal enmity into the struggle to dislodge the enemy and if better help had come from Satara. As it was Maratha infiltration into the territory hitherto under the Sidis and its control by the Marathas was no mean achievement for it guaranteed the integrity of the Maratha dominion. For all practical purposes the Sidi was pushed back into the sea and his activity was confined largely to the island fortress of Janjira.

8

March on Delhi and the Battle of Bhopal

EARLY IN HIS career Baji Rao told Raja Shahu that he would carry the Maratha flag far and wide. This he was able to achieve by a continuous scheme of distant operations, by exploring new regions for employing his soldiers, by levying contributions from the wealthy Mughal princes and by rallying together those forces of the Empire which had so long felt oppressed and leading them into a great battle for the disintegration of that Empire. By the year 1736 Baji Rao was well poised to carry arms to the imperial capital. Most of his enemies had been humbled. Sambhaji had been reconciled to Raja Shahu. At Dabhoi (1731) the Senapati, Trimbak Rao Dhabade, was overthrown and Nizam-ul-Mulk purchased peace by agreeing to allow the Peshwa to proceed with his plans in the north unmolested. More than that, Maratha authority was established in Gujarat. Shahu's enemies in the west coast had been subjugated. The Peshwa's lieutenants Holkar, Sindia and Pawar extended Maratha supremacy in Malwa and in 1736 the friendship of the Rajput princes led by Jai Singh had been acquired. Maratha success in Malwa led them on into Bundelkhand where the sons of Raja Chhatrasal became the champions of the Peshwa's autho-

rity. Thus the time was ripe for Baji Rao to make his dash on Delhi.

Towards the latter half of 1736 the Peshwa instructed Ranoji Sindia and Malhar Rao Holkar to proceed to Malwa and keep the troops and equipment in readiness for the impending hostilities. Jai Singh had already secretly invited the Peshwa to undertake the expedition. After getting Raja Shahu's permission Baji Rao left Poona on the 12th November, 1736. Early in January 1737, he entered Malwa. Crossing the Narmada he proceeded to Bhopal and besieged it. Yar Muhammad Khan the Rohilla chief, came from Islamnagar to relieve Bhopal but unable to succeed he turned back. The Peshwa entrusted the siege of Bhopal to Holkar and went to besiege Islamnagar. Yar Muhammad Khan purchased peace by agreeing to pay 5 lakhs. Returning to Bhopal Baji Rao went to Bhilsa and took it. Here on the 13th January, Ranoji Sindia met him and further plans for the campaign were worked out. Thereafter he returned to Bundelkhand.

The Emperor was not keeping idle. He summoned Saadat Khan to co-operate with the other Mughal commanders who had been ordered to proceed immediately to meet the Maratha challenge. On the 8th March, Khan Dauran proceeded eastwards followed by the Vazir who left on the 21st March. Khan Dauran and Saadat Khan were encamped at Agra. The Vazir was also marching towards Agra. Jai Singh was reported to have left his capital to join the imperial forces. Thus the polymorphous Mughal army led by all available generals was poised to meet the Maratha attack. From Bundelkhand Baji Rao and his generals were observing the movements of the Mughal grandees. They now proceeded to attack. Leaving his heavy equipment at Jaitpur in charge of Jagatraj Bundela, the second son of the late Raja Chhatrasal, the Peshwa advanced to a distance of forty miles from Agra. On the way Bhadwar was attacked. Angered by this Raja Anuradh Singh came with a well-equipped force from his fort town of Ater to meet the Mara-

thas. But he was no match to the intrepid soldiers of the Peshwa and had to sue for peace and pay a heavy sum. Thereafter Malhar Rao Holkar, Pilaji Jadhav and other Maratha generals crossed the Jamuna and pillaged the Doab. Shukhohabad was invested and Firuzabad and Itimadpur near Agra were raided. Holkar and his men finally arrived at Jalesar. Suddenly the army of Saadat Khan nearly 1,50,000 strong was sighted with an advance guard of 12,000 under Abdul Mansur Khan. Holkar and his troops tried to surround this advance guard which retreated towards the main Mughal army under Saadat Khan. In the action that ensued the Marathas were thrown pell-mell and had to turn back in great panic (12th March, 1737). The Mughal soldiery pursued the Marathas and took as many as 1,000 prisoners. While crossing the Jamuna several Maratha soldiers were drowned, but the majority reached the other side. Saadat Khan was overwhelmed with happiness by this success for he thought that the main army of the Marathas had been defeated and the Empire saved. In an exaggerated account of his success to the Emperor he said: "I have routed the Maratha army that had crossed the Jamuna, two thousand horsemen have been killed and two thousand more drowned in the river. Malhar Rao Holkar and Vithoba Bole have been wounded. This is the fate of Baji Rao's incursion. I will cross the Jamuna, defeat the Marathas and drive them beyond the Chambal."

The Emperor showered honours and rewards on the Mughal generals. Saadat Khan returned to Mathura and along with Qamar-ud-din-Khan the Vazir, Khan Dauran and Muhammad Khan Bangash celebrated the Mughal victory over the Marathas. In the midst of their feasting they learnt that the astute Baji Rao had already taken a different route and was before the imperial capital "to let the Emperor know the truth, to prove that I am still in Hindustan, and to show him the Marathas at the gate of his capital." It was executed with great audacity.

Baji Rao who was then in Bundelkhand had received

complete intelligence about the Mughal army's movements from his agents Dhondo Govind and Hingne. The Peshwa had two courses open to him : " to attack Saadat Khan and destroy him ; or fall upon Delhi itself and burn its outlaying parts. " He chose the latter course. Avoiding the main Mughal concentration, Baji Rao advanced stealthily towards Delhi. It was then the Khan Dauran and Bangash were marching towards Agra where they joined Saadat Khan on the 23rd March. They expelled from their camp Baji Rao's agent, Dhondo Govind on the ground that he was a mischief maker. He joined Baji Rao.

By forced marches the Peshwa reached Kalka on the outskirts of Delhi on the 28th March, 1737. He gave up the idea of setting fire to the adjoining suburbs, " considering it a sacrilege to commit such a wanton outrage upon the ancient city. " Moreover, March 29th was Sri Rama Navami Day and crowds had gathered to celebrate the event. News of the Peshwa's presence in the capital reached the Emperor. He desired that Baji Rao should send his agent Dhondo Govind to the court for negotiation but the Peshwa declined unless an imperial guard was sent to escort him. Fearing mischief to the city by the contiguity of his soldiers the Peshwa retired to the Talkatora grove.

There was utter consternation in the Emperor's court. Since all the Mughal grandees were away there was no senior counsellor to advise the Emperor as to how to meet the Maratha threat. And those who were with the Emperor, no doubt, discussed several plans. " At one time they would enter into arguments how these ' devils ' (Marathas) could have reached Delhi without encountering the two formidable imperial armies already in the field. If those had been defeated, the only thing left for the Emperor and court was either to demand terms or escape down the Jamuna in boats. Thus, amid much vague and silly talk, unconsidered advice was tendered and useless proposals were brought forward by each man according to his disposition and ability."[1] It was finally decided that the Empe-

ror's favourite, Amir Khan, should proceed to meet the Marathas with available forces. He was assisted in this enterprise by Aghar Khan and Mubariz Khan, son of Mubariz Khan, commandant of the Hyderabad fort, who in the year 1724 was defeated and killed by Nizam-ul-Mulk in the action at Shaker Khera. The imperial artillery was also placed at the disposal of Amir Khan. Thus strengthened Amir Khan placed his contingent in defensive positions all along the route from the city to the Talkatora gardens where the Peshwa and his soldiers were encamped. The younger elements in the Mughal contingent led by the fiery Mir Hasan Khan Koka, agitated for quick attack on the Marathas. As a result a contingent of 7 to 8 thousand troops led by Mir Hasan Khan ventured out and was drawn deep into the Maratha camp where the Peshwa's soldiers led by Holkar, Sindia and Pawar inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mughals. The Peshwa gave a graphic account of his activities in Delhi in the following letter to his brother, Chimnaji Appa :

> "You must have already learnt from our letters sent with *kasis* (special couriers) in which I have given in detail the news of our having left in Bundelkhand all our followers in charge of Prince Jagatraj and of the action with Saadat Khan. Saadat Khan crossed the Jumuna and arrived at Agra. If we were to meet him there we were not sure of defeating him owing to his advantageous position there. If we were to wait at the confluence of the Jumuna and the Gambhir, that place was also unsafe owing to landslips and erosions. Besides, Khan Dauran and Muhammad Khan Bangash were on their way to Agra from Delhi, and in case they and Saadat Khan happened to join, it would have been a serious affair. So it was not thought proper to encamp at the confluence. Further Saadat Khan wrote to the

[1] Irvine : *The Later Mughals*, Vol. II, p. 290

Emperor and his courtiers that he had routed the Maratha army that had crossed the Jumuna, killing two thousand cavalry and drowning two thousand in the river; that Malharji Holkar and Vithoba Bole had fallen in the action. Such had been the result of Baji Rao's invasion! He further vauntingly wrote that he would cross the Jumuna and defeat the Marathas and drive them away beyond the Chambal. The Emperor expressed great satisfaction at this and sent to Saadat Khan a dress of honour, a pearl necklace, an elephant and an aigrette. Clothes of honour were also presented to Saadat Khan's agent at the Delhi court. Thus Saadat strengthened his, and his party's influence with the Emperor. He also wrote to several nobles in contemptuous terms about the Marathas. Dhondo Govind (Peshwa's agent at Delhi) kept us informed of all these particulars from time to time. In short, Saadat Khan tried to impress the Mughal court that the Maratha army had neither spirit nor energy and that he had completely defeated it. You are already aware how things pass in Mughal politics. No action and high talks is their motto. The Emperor fully believes all this, but he must now be disillusioned. This could be done in two ways — either by inflicting a crushing defeat on Saadat Khan, or by marching on Delhi and setting fire to the capital, and thus disproving Saadat Khan's boastful statements. We accordingly decided to march against Delhi as Saadat Khan would not leave Agra and setting fire to the capital bring to the notice of the Emperor the existence of the Marathas. With this determination we started for Delhi on the 26 *Jilkad* (18th March, 1737). Leaving aside the imperial route we followed the hilly tract along the Newati frontier through the territory of Daman Singh. Dhondopant our Vakil, was with Khan Dauran. Saadat Khan sent word to Khan Dauran: " I have defeated Baji Rao's army. His followers have fled away and Baji Rao himself has crossed the Chambal. Now why do you flatter

him and with what object? Why should you entertain his Vakil at your court? He must be now dismissed." Dhondopant was accordingly sent away. He then came to us. Kamruddin Khan, Aymulla Khan and others encountered us, but we did not meet them; leaving them 14 miles off to our right, we arrived at Delhi on 7 *Jilhej* (28 March) after forced marches of 40 miles each. We pitched our camp near Kushbandi (a suburb of Delhi) leaving Barapula and Kalika temple to our right. We wanted to burn the capital to ashes, but on second thought we saw no good in destroying the mighty city and ruining the imperial throne at Delhi. Moreover the Emperor and Khan Dauran desired to make peace with us, but the Mughals would not agree to it. An act of outrage, however, breaks the thread of politics. We therefore gave up the idea of burning the capital and sent letters to the Emperor and Raja Bakhatmal. Two elephants, some horses and camels, coming out from the city were however captured by our advance guard. Some of our soldiers had a scuffle with the people from Delhi who had gone out to attend the Bhawani fair. Next day, Wednesday, 30 March, Raja Bakhatmal sent a reply under commands of the Emperor, asking us to send Dhondopant to the imperial court. We did not however, despatch him as there was a great commotion in Delhi owing to our presence near the capital; but we sent word in reply. 'We are sending Dhondopant, please send a strong guard under a reliable officer to escort him. We are marching on to the Zil Tank as our presence near the city is likely to disturb its peace.' And we moved on. As we were passing the capital a force consisting of 7 to 8 thousand men was sent by the Emperor under Nawab Mir Hasan Khan Koka, a commander of the Khas Chowki, Nawab Amir Khan, Khoja Roz Afzul Khan, Raja Shivsingh Jamadar, commander of the cavalry, Muzfur Khan, deputy general, Nawab Muzfur Khan, brother of Khan Dauran, who met us

near Rikabgunj outside the city. Satwaji Jadhav who commanded the advance guard, met the Mughal forces, and a fight took place between them. On hearing this, we sent forces to help him under Malharji Holkar, Ranoji Shinde, Tukoji Pawar, Jiwaji Pawar, Yeswantrao Pawar, Manaji Payagude and Govind Hari. They gallantly fought with the Mughals and completely defeated them. Raja Shivsingh and ten other noblemen were killed ; Nawab Mir Hasan Koka was wounded and about three hundred soldiers from the Emperor's army were killed and four hundred wounded. Roz Afzul Khan, Amir Khan and Muzfur Khan fled to the capital. We captured two thousand horses, though five or six thousand fled away. Indroji Kadam from Ranoji Shinde's cavalry received a bullet wound by which two of his fingers were cut off. No other person of note on our side was killed, but some men and horses were wounded. We then encamped at the Zil Tank. About two hours before sunset news came that Kamruddin Khan had arrived from Padashahpur. We at once started to meet him. A fight took place. Yeshwantrao Pawar captured an elephant that was within a gun shot from the Mughal artillery. A number of horses and camels came to our camp when it was sunset. We wanted to besiege the Mughal army from all sides and give them a crushing defeat next day. But we could not do so as there were several difficulties in our way, the Zil Tank was about 32 miles off from us, Kamruddin Khan was to our right, and in our front was the capital. Besides this, the news of our march on Delhi reached Nawab Khan Dauran, Saadat Khan and Muhammad Khan Bangash on Tuesday 7 *Jilhej* (28 March) at Radhakund. They left behind their heavy baggage and immediately proceeded to Badel, about 64 miles distant, with an army about twenty five to thirty thousand strong. Next day they halted on the rivulet of Alawardi about 50 miles off. On Thursday morning Khan Dauran, Saadat Khan and Bangash were to join Kamruddin Khan.

The situation then would have been perilous as the capital was near. We, therefore, left the Mughals and halted at a distance of 8 miles on our side. Firangoji Patankar was killed by a bullet. A few men and some horses were also wounded. The Mughal casualties amounted to from 5 to 10. On Thursday Saadat Khan, Khan Dauran, and Bangash joined Kamruddin Khan. Their camps were spread from Alawardi to the Zil Tank. We designed to draw the Mughals on us and then to fall back and defeat them. With this object, we broke the camp and moved on via Revad, Kotputali and Manoharpur. The news has come that the Mughals have not as yet their camps between Alawardi and Zil Tank and that Mir Hasan Khan Koka who was wounded in the first action has died. Khan Dauran wrote letter after letter to Sawai Jai Singh to send reinforcement. He has accordingly started with a force of fifteen to sixteen thousand men and artillery and has arrived at Basava. He intends visiting Khan Dauran. Sawaji has also sent us friendly letters, requesting us to leave his territory undisturbed. Our agent, Venkaji Ram, is in his camp. He writes these letters to us. We do not disturb his territory, as we expect to get supplies of grain and fodder from Sawaji on our way. Abhayasingh is at Jodhpur. Now we are going to collect our dues from the Gwalior and Bhadavar provinces. If the Mughals still pursue us, we shall harass them and reduce them by driving them by force from place to place and utterly crush them by the grace of our King (Raja Shahu) and the blessings of our ancestors. Be not anxious on our account. The chief thing to be noted is that the Emperor and Khan Dauran wish to make peace with us, while the Mughals are striving to defeat us, and Saadat Khan is at their head. If by the favour of God his vanity is subdued, everything will be to our satisfaction. If the terms of peace are favourable we shall accept them; otherwise we shall not conclude any peace. We have

annexed the territory about Delhi. The territory about Sonapat and Panipat beyond the Jumuna still remains with the Mughals. We shall plunder and capture it soon and see that the Mughals will be starved. We shall write to you later on what happens here."[2]

When the news of the defeat of the Mughal troops by the Marathas spread, a sudden fear seized the citizens of Delhi who expected the attack of the Maratha conqueror any moment. But Baji Rao did not proceed with his victory although he could have taken the city unopposed. He had received intelligence that the Vazir with his army was coming towards Delhi in rapid marches when he heard that Baji Rao was before the gates of the capital. The Peshwa realised that any further stay in the city would greatly imperil his position and endanger the lines of communication with the Maratha mainland. He was content with the imperial offer of the Viceroyalty of Malwa. He, therefore, left Delhi with his soldiers towards the south. The Peshwa suspected that the Nizam was active. He directed Chimnaji Appa that " if he (Nizam) attempts to cross the Narmada, fall instantly on his rear and put heel ropes on him."[3] Twenty miles from Delhi at a place called Badshahpur the Mughal soldiers of the Vazir were sighted. In fact an advance party of the Mughals saw Baji Rao and Mastani " seated on the saddle cover, drinking and singing while they rested. " Now the Peshwa had to retreat as quickly as possible as a combination of the Mughal forces would prove disastrous to the Marathas. Passing through Rajputana he reached Narnol and then Ajmer. The Mughals could not pursue the Marathas and the Emperor had recalled them to Delhi. The Rajput princes once again affirmed their loyalty to the Peshwa and solicited his protection.

[2] Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, Appendix, pp. 451-53

[3] Grant Duff: *History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 443

Raja Shahu had been pressing the Peshwa to return home quickly. In one of his letters the Raja wrote to the Peshwa: "A servant of unparalleled capacity like you is a great asset for us. You must not seek a personal interview with the Emperor. The Nizam and other grandees, we are informed, are not at all friendly towards you. They are all bent upon your ruin. So please take the utmost care and caution and send us prompt news of your immediate plans." The Peshwa went to Gwalior and while on his way to Satara he observed at Sironj (May 1737) the movements of the Nizam who had been summoned by the Emperor to lead the new offensive against the Peshwa. The Peshwa returned to Satara from his victorious campaign to add to the pride of his king and countrymen who were already thrilled by the conquest of Salsette from the Portuguese by Chimnaji Appa.

Baji Rao's dash on Delhi may be said to mark the apogee of his career of conquest. It was executed with such daring and audacity that neither the Mughal generals nor Mughal intelligence could comprehend or foresee the Peshwa's movements. It was indeed a most famous assault on the tottering Empire. If Shivaji went to Delhi to put before Alamgir the Maratha demands and if Balaji Vishwanath wrested from the Syeds the Maratha right to *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* in the six Deccan subahs, Baji Rao's entry into Delhi symbolised the assertion of Maratha sovereignty over the territory conquered from the Mughals. More than all, it proclaimed Baji Rao as the one leader who could inspire his countrymen including the Rajputs, the Sikhs and the Bundelas to break the shackles imposed by Mughal rule and assert their independence.

The Vazir and Khan Dauran, Saadat Khan and Muhammad Khan Bangash reached Delhi after Baji Rao had left it with a trail of glory. The Emperor ordered Saadat Khan to return to his province and posted Muhammad Bangash to Agra to guard the approaches. He invited Nizam-ul-Mulk to come to the succour of the imperial throne. To

Khan Dauran who so long "brooked no rival near the throne," the imperial invitation to the Nizam was, no doubt, galling; but his incapacity to deal effectively with the Marathas having been proved, Khan Dauran could no longer effectively prevent the leadership of the Nizam. The Vazir, Qamar-ud-din Khan was also not opposed to the Emperor's proposal. Thus it was that the duty of defending the imperial domains and checking the ever growing ambition of the Marathas for territorial expansion was given to the Nizam. The imperial assignment was accepted by the Nizam as it provided an opportunity for him to try once again to overpower the Peshwa if possible and assert his supremacy. The great victories of the Peshwa in Malwa, Bundelkhand, round about Delhi and against the Portuguese filled the aged Nizam with jealousy and rancour. While he remained in the Deccan merely as the feudatory of the Emperor the Marathas claimed *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the six Deccan subahs and were carrying on their arms into the heart of Hindustan and striking at the very parts of the Empire which were assigned to him. His earlier attempts to destroy the Marathas had failed. At Mungi Shevgaon (1727) he had to enter into a treaty with the Peshwa to save himself from utter defeat. His alliance with Trimbak Rao to save Gujarat resulted in the defeat of the Senapati at Dabhoi (1731). Foiled in his plans and sullen with disappointment, the Nizam had to enter into a secret compact with the Peshwa at Rohi Rameshwar (1732) which virtually gave the Nizam's approval to the aggressive campaigns of the Peshwa over the Emperor's domains. During the next four years the Nizam was busy in the Deccan although he watched with great uneasiness the success of Baji Rao. He was glad, of course, that he was able to divert the weight of Maratha aggression against the Empire, but this did not guarantee the security of his domain in the Deccan. He had, therefore, to come to grips once again with the Marathas. And when Emperor Muhammad Shah sent his emissaries to the Nizam to come to his aid,

the Nizam thought that this was an opportunity to crush the Marathas once for all and assert his supremacy. He, therefore, completed his preparations to protect his dominions from Maratha incursions by posting Abdul Rahim Khan and Anwarul Khan in Khandesh with a force of five thousand and then by directing his son, Nasir Jang, to hold Aurangabad with another ten thousand. Thereafter by the middle of April 1737, he moved north. Although the Peshwa had directed Chimnaji Appa to watch the movements of the Nizam and "put heel ropes on him," Chimnaji could not do anything as his campaign against the Portuguese at Bassein was then reaching its climax. Thus the Nizam was able to proceed unmolested. The Peshwa's success at Delhi and the defeat of the several armies sent against him were not relished by the Nizam. When the Peshwa returned from Delhi he observed the movements of the Nizam (May, 1737) at Sironj. This was an opportunity for the Peshwa to annihilate the Nizam's forces. However, the astute Nizam pleaded that his visit to Delhi was only to atone for his past conduct towards his suzerain. It cannot be said that Baji Rao could have believed this story but then evidently he did not want to take any action as perhaps he was anxious to reach home quickly.

Thus saved from what might have been a complete disaster, the Nizam reached Delhi in June. The return of this crafty warrior was the occasion for much rejoicing in the capital and for the conferment of many favours on him by the Emperor. Everything was done to please the Nizam as all were convinced that he alone could save the Empire from certain destruction at the hands of the Marathas who had during the past fifteen years carried on their depredation into Gujarat, Malwa and Bundelkhand. Malwa which Muhammad Shah had recently ceded to Baji Rao was gifted to the Nizam while the Viceroyalty of Gujarat was given to his eldest son, Ghazi-ud-Din. Jai Singh was humiliated and his policy of appeacement was discredited. The entire resources of the Empire were placed at

the disposal of the Nizam. Every one believed that the Nizam was going to crush the Marathas. Thus equipped, the Nizam left the capital in October with thirty thousand soldiers assisted by a fine artillery and marched into Bundelkhand where he was joined by Saadat Khan's troops, the Raja of Orcha, Datia and other Bundela chiefs who swelled the army into seventy thousand with an enormous firing power. By the middle of December this great army arrived near Bhopal determined to destroy the enemy.

The news about the Nizam's preparations had already reached the Peshwa. This was a great challenge to Maratha claims and naturally even the calm Shahu Raja was very perturbed. But Baji Rao cheered up his master and took up the challenge of the Nizam for the last time. Calling up the Maratha detachments from all quarters and at the head of an eighty thousand troop Baji Rao left Poona on the 15th October. To prevent succour to the Nizam from the south, Baji Rao stationed his brother Chimnaji with an army of ten thousand at Varangaum on the Tapti. Other Maratha leaders like Raghoji Bhonsle, Damaji Gaikwad and Avji Kavde were assigned special jobs to prevent the enemy from receiving any help from any quarter. The Peshwa also posted agents and spies to watch for the movement of the enemy and for its quick report to him. Having thus protected his lines of communications and securing that the enemy did not get any succour from his base in the south the Peshwa crossed the Narmada towards the end of November and invaded Malwa. The Peshwa's plan was that the advance Maratha bands should so bypass the Mughals that they should be brought south and face the weight of the Peshwa's main force. This plan seemed to succeed and when the Nizam found that his troops would face certain defeat if they were to drift farther south, he withdrew them and decided to seek shelter in the well-fortified place of Bhopal. He believed that such a course would enable him to deal with the Maratha bands piecemeal. But the Nizam did not take care to see whether

the presence of so huge an army in a walled city could be sustained for a long time without continuous supply of provisions. In fact Baji Rao wanted that the Nizam's troops should be surrounded on all sides and supplies cut off so that the huge army might be starved into submission. What he expected happened. Instead of going into a straight fight the Nizam withdrew into the city[4] and took up a position which he thought was safe and waited for the Marathas to attack him. The Peshwa took up the offensive. The Nizam's artillery, no doubt, prevented the Marathas from going into a pitched fight. But then the Peshwa imposed a strict blockade and successfully prevented any supply from reaching the besieged army.

A huge army cannot be sustained for long from out of the meagre resources of the city of Bhopal. "The place was completely blockaded and no grain or grass could pass in from outside. Soon the small supply in the town was exhausted : for a day the horses and camels subsisted on the bark of trees and water reeds. Even this could no longer be obtained. The Rajputs and the Bundela troops now repented the folly of having joined the Nizam. Their baggage being held up in the town they could not effect their escape from the fort, nor could they leave their entrenched position to engage the enemy for fear that they may not be supported by the Nizam's Mughal troops. The Nizam on his part suspected the loyalty of the Rajputs and was not prepared to risk the rest of his army. Men and animals famished for want of food and to their great annoyance the Marathas day and night threw in rockets in the huddled mass of the Mughal soldiery and caused great confusion in their camp."[5] A critical situation thus arose.

The plight of the besieged troops was so bad that the Nizam sent emissaries to Delhi to send help. But nothing

[4] According to Baji Rao : "He (the Nizam) is an old and experienced man ; I cannot comprehend how he got himself into this difficulty ; it will ruin him in the opinion of all India."

Irvine : *Later Mughals*, Vol. II, p. 301

came and in fact Khan Dauran was very happy over the discomfiture of the Nizam. Nor could reinforcements from his son Nazir Jang in the south come because Chimnaji Appa was ever vigilant to destroy any force that came from that side. In that gloom of frustration the Nizam tried to move out of Bhopal under cover of his guns. But the Maratha soldiers so harassed him that he could hardly move more than three to four miles a day. With each day the situation became more and more intolerable and the Nizam in despair had no option but to ask for terms of peace through Ayamal, the Dewan of Jai Singh. On the 7th January, 1738 at Doraha Sarai about 64 miles from Sironj the Nizam signed a convention by which he promised to grant the Marathas a formal cession of Malwa under the imperial seal, deliver all the territory between the Narmada and the Chambal and pay 50 lakhs in cash from the imperial treasury towards expenses of the Marathas.

The battle of Bhopal and the convention of Doraha Sarai were the last great triumphs of Baji Rao.[6] They were also the most humiliating defeats to the Nizam whose grandiose plans to save the Empire and destroy the Maratha power were smashed to pieces by the greatest soldier of Maharashtra, Baji Rao. If at Mungi Shevgaon the Nizam recognised Maratha supremacy in the Deccan, at Doraha Sarai, he acknowledged the Maratha sovereignty over Malwa and all the territory between the Chambal and the Narmada. It was given to Baji Rao to crush his enemy completely. But his magnanimity far outshone his spirit of vengeance towards one who had on successive occasions mobilised all the resources and all the opponents to destroy the Maratha power.[7] In communicating his decision to accept the Nizam's offer Baji Rao wrote to his brother : " Fortified as the Nawab was with a strong artillery and with the Bundela and Rajput princes as his

[5] Dighe : *Peshwa Baji Rao I & Maratha Expansion*, pp. 146-7

[6] " The victory of Bhopal marks the zenith of the Peshwa's triumphant career." *Ibid.*, p. 149

staunch allies, I accepted your advice and agreed to much lower terms than could have been exacted. You can realise what a severe mortification it must have been to Asaf Jah to sign a document with his own hand parting with Malwa and the rights therein of *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of which he never allowed even a mere mention till then. It was the height of shame for him to be compelled to yield these. Even this much success is the result of the blessings we have secured both from our revered Chhatrapati and our late parent. The highest noble of the Mughal empire has been brought to his knees. He has taken sacred oaths on the Koran to abide by the terms agreed upon."[8]

[7] "Bhopal was thus the last and the highest triumph of Baji Rao, glorious on account of the moderation displayed by him in the moment of victory." G. S. Sardesai : *op. cit.*, p. 169

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60

9

The Humbling of the Portuguese

THE PESHWA's struggle against the Portuguese was a grand attempt not only to prevent the depredations and furtherance of alien rule but also to protect the people from the humiliating experiences under colonial domination. It was an evil day for India when on the 8th July, 1497 Vasco da Gama sailed with an armada from Belem and after ten months on the high seas anchored off Kappat, a few miles to the north of Calicut on the 17th May, 1498. Through deceit and by taking advantage of the internal conditions, the foreigners slowly built up a number of factories along the west coast and introduced a system of government unparallelled for its ruthlessness and barbarity. Albunquerque's conquest of Goa in 1510 made Portugal one of the minor powers in India, bringing it in direct relations with the neighbouring Vijayanagar and Bijapur kingdoms. Goa was the commercial outlet for these two kingdoms which were completely dependent on the Portuguese for all their foreign requirements, especially horses from Arabia and Persia. While their relations with these two kingdoms were cordial, the Portuguese found in the kings of Gujarat their chief enemies. Diva or Diu the small island off the coast of Kathiawar which commanded the Gulf of Cambay, was coveted

by the Portuguese. The king of Gujarat, Bahadur Shah on the other hand, was equally keen not to part with it. In their attempts to wrest Diu, the Portuguese under Antonio de Silveira and Diego de Silveira harassed the entire coast from Bandra to Surat, and the captured people were compelled to work in Goa. To prevent the Portuguese depredations, Malik Tokan, an enterprising Gujarat officer, built a strong fortress at the mouth of the Ulhas river near the village of Vasai. However, this fortress was razed to the ground by the Portuguese General, Nano de Cunho.

Fortune was on the side of the Portuguese. It was now that Emperor Humayun prepared for an invasion and conquest of Gujarat. At this critical juncture King Bahadur Shah sought the succour of the Portuguese for which he offered them Bombay, Mahim, Diu, Daman, Chaul and Vasai. This was accepted and due to the help rendered by the Portuguese to Bahadur Shah, the imperial army had to retreat to Delhi in 1535. The Portuguese now turned their attention to fortifying these places especially Vasai. This little village is dear to the Hindus as the seat of worship of God Siva. The Portuguese corrupted the name Vasai to Bacaim, which in turn got corrupted to Bassein. Bassein was made the capital of the new acquisitions called by the Portuguese as the province of the north and the governing officer was called the general of the north. The Portuguese also occupied the tract known as Sashasti or the island of sixty-six villages. Sashasti was corrupted by the Portuguese into Salcete which in turn came to be known as Salsette. The richness of the soil and the abundant yield of crop of the island were fully exploited by the Portuguese who settled here in large numbers. The flourishing trade added to the wealth and prosperity of Bassein and its inhabitants.

In 1661 the island of Bombay was given to the English by the Portuguese king as dowry of Catharine of Braganza, the queen of Charles II. The English king in turn transferred Bombay to the East India Company which became

the formidable rival to the Portuguese. But more than from the English, the great trouble to the Portuguese came from the Marathas. With the capture of Kalyan by Shivaji from the Sultan of Bijapur in 1657, the Marathas came into violent contact with the Portuguese. However, the sobriety and the conciliatory attitude of the Maratha king prevented any open war with the Portuguese. But when Sambhaji succeeded Shivaji, he proved a great terror to the Portuguese. His pursuit of the Portuguese army under Alvor and its defeat at Phonda which almost jeopardised the safety of Goa was an act of great daring. Sambhaji's cruel execution and the subsequent Maratha struggles with the Mughals gave breathing space for the Portuguese. But with the rise of the Peshwas to power and their assertion of the Maratha right to *sardeshmukhi* against the Portuguese, the struggle once again began. The immediate Maratha threat was to Bassein and Thana, both of which were prized more than Goa by the Portuguese.

The Portuguese province of the north stretched from Chaul in the south to Daman in the north. The fertility of the soil and its rich returns added to the wealth of the Portuguese inhabitants in Goa. The Portuguese had also improved the defences of the places. They built "places of special strength at Bassein, Asheri, Tarapur, Mahim, Daman, Chaul; had raised royal fortifications at the head-quarter of each sub-division; guarded the entrances to their territories with forts and stockades, they armed several of their colleges and monasteries and in each village the proprietor built a watch-tower or a moated grange."[1] However, they were not men of calibre to man these forts. A great degeneracy had taken place in the moral and religious attitudes of the Portuguese. The Portuguese society was rotten to the core and the morals of the community were extremely lax. Profligacy had become dominant and the public administration was equally tainted. Justice was

[1] *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. XIII, Part II, pp. 456-7

bought and sold; public offices were put up for sale.[2] "The religious zeal which once inspired them with energy and generous courage was afterwards manifested only in ferocity and served to stifle all scruples about pillaging, cheating and enslaving idolators. As they pretended to be endowed with authority over the kingdom of Asia by a decree of the Pope, they chose to suppose that a power to seize the property of individuals was also conferred upon them. Demanding tribute from the ships of every country, ravaging the coasts and insulting native chiefs, they became the scourge and terror of all natives, bordering upon the ocean. Nor was their treatment of one another better than of foreigners. They were divided into factions and amongst all avarice, debauchery and cruelty prevailed. Many of them had seven or eight concubines whom they employed as menial servants. Effeminacy pervaded their armies and they lost the courage for which they had once been celebrated. No Portuguese pursued any other object than the advancement of his own interest, there was no zeal, no union for the common good."[3] The religious persecution of the Portuguese overshadowed every other activity. Their proselytising zeal drove them into horrid persecution of the Hindus. The Portuguese left no cruelty unpractised to achieve their objective. They desecrated and destroyed Hindu temples, drove out the Brahman priests and subjected to punishment entire villages for publicly worshipping according to their religion.[4]

In 1719 the Marathas established themselves in Kalyan and extended their activities into the Portuguese territories. The first serious breach in the Maratha-Portuguese relations occurred in 1730 when the Marathas would have over-run the northern territories but for the timely help from the English in Bombay which prevented the invasion of Salsette. The Portuguese Viceroy, the Count of Sando-

[2] Fonseca: *Sketch of the City of Goa*, p. 168

[3] Anderson: *The English on the West Coast*, p. 16

[4] *Salsette Chronicle*, pp. 2-4. Grose: *A Voyage to the Indies*, p. 69

mil ordered that the Bassein and Salsette islands should be fortified and Thana should be placed in a state of preparedness to meet any threat from the Marathas. The defences of Thana could never be completed due to lack of money and the Portuguese found their diversion and opportunity to expand their territories in the quarrels of the sons of Kanhoji Angre. The Count of Sandomil was caught in the quarrels between Sambhaji Angre and Manaji Angre and was ultimately compelled to sign a treaty with Peshwa Baji Rao. One of the clauses of the treaty was that the Portuguese should give the Marathas in the island of Salsette a site for building a factory. The general of the north at this time was Luis Botelho, the Viceroy's nephew. He was young and impetuous and did not like to perform the function of selecting a site for the Marathas inside Salsette. The Peshwa scenting trouble sent his brother-in-law Venkat Rao Joshi to demand from Luis Botelho the site as promised by the treaty. The Portuguese general not only refused to give the site but also insulted the Peshwa.[5] There was no other course but to declare war on the Portuguese.

It was a war not merely to establish a title for possession but it was a war of liberation of the Hindus from the Portuguese tyranny. In a letter dated October 3, 1737, the English at Bombay wrote to the Court of Directors : " Their [Baji Rao and Chimnaji] apparent chief aims has for a long time been the getting of a sea port for themselves. And this view of acquiring a port or settlement on the sea coast must be considered as the principal motive that hath determined the Marathas to this invasion, though perhaps it may have been hastened by the well-grounded complaints of their Gentoo Brethren under the Portuguese government who

5 " Luis Botelho unable any longer to put off the fulfilment of the viceroy's undertaking lost his temper and so far forgot not only the courtesies of diplomacy but those of ordinary social life, as to call to Venkatrao's face, the handsome and fair-skinned Baji Rao a negro. Venkatrao at once broke off the interview and returned to Baji Rao who deeply incensed, determined to avenge the insult without delay."

Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 261

have been made frequent examples of the cruelty of the inquisition which had been exercised upon those unhappy subjects with equal severity, ignorance and superstition. A proceeding, the more impolitik in the Portuguese as they were destitute of real strength to protect themselves in the exercise of it." The English warned the Portuguese about the gathering storm but the general of the north replied saying that he was in need of no such advice as "I am prepared as much as reason requires with my forces." The Marathas had meticulously prepared the details of the attack on Salsette. The Peshwa had asked King Shahu to appoint Chimnaji Appa as the generalissimo of the expeditionary force which had been collected in secret from all parts of Maharashtra.

On the night of March 26, 1737, the Maratha armies converged towards Thana fort and occupied it. The fort was renamed *Fateh Buruj* or the tower of victory. Thereafter the Maratha forces advanced into Salsette. The forts of Parsik and Arnala and the island of Dharavi were captured. Ghorbander was also captured. The Marathas easily became the masters of the whole island of Salsette except Bandra and Versova. They did not follow up their victory to capture Bassein. Instead, Chimnaji Appa returned to Poona after leaving sufficient forces to invest Bassein.

The conquest of Salsette by the Marathas created consternation in the minds of the Governor and Council of Bombay who prepared to put their place in a "proper posture of defence." If the Marathas had decided to continue their march into the island of Bombay it cannot be said with certainty that the English could have been able to defend it.[6] To placate the Marathas the Governor of Bombay made friendly approaches to Chimnaji Appa and offered to mediate between the Marathas and the Portu-

[6] According to Surat Consultation of April 6, 1737: "Bombay lays open to any further attempts they [i.e., the Marathas] might make and much more so by the defenceless condition."

Factory Records, Surat, Vol. 21

guese.[7] This did not lead to any results. The Marathas made two bold bids to take Bassein but could not succeed. The Portuguese made attempts to enlist the support of the English for a combined effort to push back the Marathas. The English did not agree to this. On the contrary, the Governor and Council of Bombay were keen to obtain the island of Salsette for themselves.[8] In fact they made the proposal to the Court of Directors[9] who resented the idea and changed the Governor and most of the Councillors. The Court of Directors stated that they were "convinced that the offensive wars and other pernicious measures which our servants have so long been engaged in and pursued have brought upon us an insupportable charge and expense"[10] and blamed the old government for making the

7 "The President.....preserved a sort of neutrality without coming to an open rupture with the Marathas, having offered his mediation for accommodating these differences though with no other expectation than to gain time which has indeed hitherto succeeded, well knowing that the Marathas' success would hinder them from listening to any term of a peace that would deprive them of so important a conquest, and that the Portuguese are still too proud and haughty to make any reasonable concessions."

Bombay to Court, Oct. 3, 1737

8 "Our Proposition is no less than the acquisition of Salsette to the Hon'ble Company, but as your Honours have so frequently declared your sentiments against new acquisitions as certainly introducing new expenses, with an uncertainty of their turning to account, and have always shown yourselves averse to engaging in a war in these parts, where trade is your chief if not your only aim we should not think of offering to your Honours any plan of that sort if our present situation and circumstances did not in our humble opinion form a very unwarrantable exception to these general Maxims."

9 "We beg here further to observe that our acquisition of Salsette could prevent the attempts of any other nation who may form and execute a design upon it, either by force or otherwise, which if effected must greatly prejudice your Honour's interest in this island, and throughout India in general; and we are not without reasonable apprehensions that the Portuguese would prefer the French to our nation and after giving it over for themselves incite to such an enterprise and Your Honours will readily anticipate the consequence of such a neighbourhood." Bombay to Court, Oct. 3, 1737

10 Court to Bombay, July 21, 1738. "Remember we are merchants, and

Marathas "our perpetual and intolerable enemies." General rules of conduct were laid down for the guidance of the new government of Bombay.

The Maratha siege of Bassein now began. The Viceroy of Goa was deeply disturbed over the fall of Salsette and to retrieve the fortunes of the Portuguese he sent Pedro de Mello to strengthen the garrison. The Viceroy also relieved his nephew, Luis Botelho of his command of Bassein and sent an intrepid soldier named Antonio Cardim Froes as general of the north. The presence of this old soldier inspired confidence in the Portuguese and they were able to repulse a Maratha attack on Bandra on the 27th August, 1737. Baji Rao realised that the time had come for a great and concentrated attack on Bassein. However, the Maratha attacks could not succeed. The Portuguese gunfire did havoc among the Maratha soldiers who tried to scale the Bassein walls. Further reinforcements enabled the Portuguese under Pedro de Mello to relieve Mahim. Emboldened by these successes the general of the north entertained the idea that he should recapture Thana from the Marathas. If this was done he thought that the Maratha army would be demoralised and might lead to their withdrawal into the mainland. With this grand vision a strong Portuguese unit led by the gallant Pedro de Mello sailed on the 24th November, 1738, in transports from Bassein into the Thana creek. The fort of Thana was then under the command of the ablest soldier of the Peshwa, Malhar Rao Holkar. Chimnaji Appa had already taken care to reinforce the fort with a fine army. Further the English Governor at Bombay, Stephen Law, on seeing the Portuguese transports, had alerted the Marathas about the impending Portuguese attack. In the battle that ensued, the Maratha artillery mowed down the Portuguese. Pedro de

as such whatever measures obstruct our trade and enlarge others, must be a very false policy in us to pursue, as many of our servants have hitherto done to our infinite cost and damage." Court to Bombay, April 7, 1738

Mello was also killed. The remnants of the Portuguese unit fled.

This signal failure was the beginning of the end of the Portuguese possession of Bassein. The Viceroy of Goa relieved Antonio Froes and appointed Martinho da Silveira as general of the north. The Marathas now pursued their designs vigorously. The siege of Mahim was renewed early in January, 1739 and the place was captured. Simultaneously the Peshwa took the necessary steps to prevent the flow of reinforcements from Goa to Bassein. He ordered the invasion of the Goa territory. On January 12, 1739, Venkat Rao Joshi, whom Luis Botelho had earlier insulted, advanced on Goa with a large army and assisted by the Sundah Rajah and the Sawant of Wari, Venkat Rao captured Margaon and laid siege to the fortress of Rachol. The Portuguese Viceroy could clearly see the writing on the wall. With the passing of time more and more disasters fell on the Portuguese. However, in the invasion of Nadir Shah, the Portuguese expected some relief. In fact the Peshwa declared : " The war with the Portuguese is as naught. There is now but one enemy in Hindustan. The whole power of the Deccan, Hindus and Musalmans, alike, must assemble and I shall spread our Marathas from the Narmada to the Chambal. " Baji Rao did not, however, abandon the siege of Bassein which was pursued with greater vigour. The Portuguese strongholds fell to the Marathas one after the other—Sirigaon, Tarapur, Dharavi, Versova, Karanja and Bandra.

Bassein was completely isolated and would have fallen but for the continued assistance of the English at Bombay. John Horne's successor Stephen Law was sending ample provisions to the Portuguese at Bassein. This together with their native courage enabled the general of the north, Martinho da Silveira, and the Portuguese under him to fight on for some time. Chimnaji Appa now directed the full weight of the Maratha arms against Bassein. Bassein was an im-

pregnable fortress and unless the two towers—San Sabastian and Nossa Senhora dos Remedios—were taken, entry into the fortress was impossible. So the Marathas tried every means to blow up the walls. Mine after mine had to be exploded but the valour of the Portuguese repulsed every attack. But they were not able to hold out for long. The assistance from Goa was not forthcoming because the safety of that city itself was threatened by the Marathas. It was in this situation that the general of the north, Martinho da Silveira, was killed (4th April. 1739) by a cannonball while inspecting the defences. Caetanho de Souza Pereira succeeded to the command but nothing could prevent the onrush of the Marathas who now had two hundred thousand men under the leadership of Chimnaji Appa and assisted by Manaji Angre, Malhar Rao Holkar and Ranoji Sindia. On the 2nd May, 1739, under the explosion set by the Marathas the towers of San Sabastian and the Remedios were blown up. Along the breaches the Maratha army delivered blow after blow. A terrible carnage followed. The fighting continued for two more days. The Portuguese garrison found that there was no other alternative but to surrender. A Portuguese officer was sent to arrange for the capitulation terms with Chimnaji Appa. The terms of surrender were signed on the 16th May, 1739. "In the hour of victory the Marathas showed commendable generosity. They allowed the garrison eight days in which to leave Bassein with the honours of war." Vessels of war in the harbour were allowed to sail away with their artillery. Liberty of worship was promised by Chimnaji Appa for all those who chose to remain in the district. Exchange of prisoners was provided for. It was also agreed to maintain the privileges of three churches in the province. The Marathas entered the fortress of Bassein on the 12th May, 1739 and on the 23rd May "at an auspicious moment the ochre coloured Maratha flag was unfurled on the walls of Bassein which proclaimed the incorporation of the mighty

citadel and the province of Salsette in the Maratha Empire."[11]

The capture of Salsette and Bassein was a remarkable achievement for Maratha arms. It was also a tribute to the leadership of Chimnaji Appa. This great soldier always under the shadow of his great brother, the Peshwa, gave one more proof of his organizing capacity. Appa was acclaimed a great national hero for delivering Bassein from the clutches of the foreigner. As a result of this campaign, the Marathas "acquired the entire northern province, twenty-two leagues in length viz., from Versova to Daman, with their four chief ports, three hundred forty villages and a revenue of two lakhs fifty thousand rupees. They gained besides Bassein eight cities, twenty fortresses, two fortified walls, the famous island of Salsette with the city of the same name and the island of Arnala. Daman escaped as also Chaul and Diu. The losses of the Portuguese at sea were equally heavy and of the greatest consequence to the state whose vessels had been always respected. The value of the implements of war, ammunition lost in the various fortresses, cities and ships exceeded 2,500,000 rupees exclusive of 593 pieces of artillery, several being of bronze and of large calibre."[12]

With the fall of Bassein the Marathas were free to join in the attempt to stem the onrush of Nadir Shah's army. The English in Bombay reported that "Shah Nadir despatched a body of thirtyfive thousand Persian horses towards Aurangabad in Deccan and was soon to follow with the rest of his army with design to reduce the Marathas entirely; who as it is said having given him fresh provocation by getting into Aurangabad before him and seizing the Nizam's immense treasures which it is thought will enrage him so much as to set about the extirpation of them in earnest, which it is reported he has solemnly vowed."[13] This

[11] Dighe: *Peshwa Baji Rao I*, p. 191
[12] Danvers: *The Portuguese in India*, Vol. II, pp. 411-3
[13] Bombay to Court, March 25, 1739

invasion never came about and might have remained a wish in the mind of the Persian monarch. On the other hand, Nadir Shah, after subjecting Delhi to a carnage and reducing the Mughal Empire to ruins left for his capital. He also issued a directive calling on the Peshwa to serve the Emperor honestly and well. The Maratha king, Shahu, was gratified at the retreat of the Persian army. The Marathas were free to concentrate their troops on Goa. It is not clear why Venkat Rao did not press the siege of Goa and compel the surrender of the Portuguese. In fact if only Goa was besieged with the same vigour with which Bassein was pressed, the Portuguese would have lost their vital stronghold and disappeared from the stage of India. Negotiations were conducted and the Portuguese purchased peace by the surrender of Chaul. A golden opportunity for taking Goa permanently from the Portuguese was lost. However, their power was greatly reduced with the cession of Bassein, Chaul and the island of Salsette to the Marathas.

10

The Closing Years

THE CONQUEST of Bassein from the Portuguese was another crowning triumph for the Peshwa. In all these twenty years since he became Peshwa, Baji Rao had relentlessly pursued the conception of Maratha expansion far and wide. His adroitness and leadership were responsible for his successive victories over the armies of Delhi, of Nizam-ul-Mulk and the Portuguese. With military power also came political power and the Peshwa was as much feared as he was loved. Raja Shahu found in the Peshwa a powerful leader who could eliminate all rivals to the king's authority. Bereft of the great talents of his illustrious grandfather, Shahu was content to hand over the management of the affairs of the kingdom to the Peshwa. During Shivaji's time, the *Ashtapradhan* or the Council of Eight which he created could tender only advice. And the final decision was that of the monarch. Shivaji not merely ruled but reigned as well. But during the time of Shahu the Peshwa was the most important functionary of the Council of Eight. The council listened to the advice of the Peshwa and was led by his views. In fact the Peshwa was the adviser to the king, the chief instrument to carry out the royal commands, the planner and the defender of the country's integrity as well as the person res-

ponsible for Maratha expansion and consolidation.

When Shahu returned to Satara from the Mughal court in May, 1707, the conditions in Maharashtra were bordering on chaos. Powerful rivals were warring with one another and Shahu's position was none too safe, what with Tarabai's ambitious plans to place her protege on the throne. However, he found in Balaji Vishwanath someone able to exercise royal authority and restore confidence in the people. Shahu was in fact unfamiliar with the intricacies of diplomacy and statecraft; nor was he a military leader. His long imprisonment in the Mughal court did not help to develop in him all the initiative and drive which were the marked features of his grandfather and which were responsible for preparing the people to march from victory to victory. He was therefore content to delegate to Balaji Vishwanath the most important functions relating to the establishment of the king's authority over the rival parties as well as the task of obtaining from the Mughals the recognition of Maratha sovereignty over all the territories known as Shivaji's *Swarajya* and the right to collect *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the six provinces of the Deccan, Mysore, Trichinopoly and Tanjore. Balaji Vishwanath succeeded in these tasks and when Baji Rao became Peshwa he carried out the ambitious programme of Maratha expansion.

Thus the struggle which Baji Rao waged for twenty years and during which he achieved signal victories led to the establishment of Maratha supremacy in the Deccan. With each success the king's admiration for and faith in his Peshwa grew. In course of time the Peshwa became "the eye of his sovereign, a faithful servant of the Crown." According to Deepsingh, the special envoy of the Jaipur Raja, the Peshwa was "the only true leader of men among the Marathas." With the exception of Baji Rao, he could see "no statesman true of his word, trusted by his Sovereign, beloved by his troops and capable of shouldering heavy responsibilities."

The Peshwa's successes did not give him the domestic felicity he longed for. As years rolled on his infatuation for his muslim mistress, the beautiful Mastani, became marked. He had to neglect his wife, Kashi Bai, who was always forgiving. His devotion to Mastani and his drinking habits alienated the orthodox society, including the members of his family. Mastani was as brave as she was beautiful. She used to accompany the Peshwa in his campaigns on horseback. Her wit and beauty and her daring greatly attracted the intrepid Baji Rao who spent most of his time in her company. In the year 1730 the Peshwa built his famous Shaniwar Palace and added to it in 1736 a portion named after Mastani. In 1734, Mastani bore Baji Rao a son who was named Shamsher Bahadur. Although Mastani was living with the Peshwa along with the other members yet her presence continued to irritate them. The Peshwa's brother, Chimnaji Appa was worried over the Peshwa's neglect of his own wife and children. The Peshwa was advised by his son Balaji, his mother Radha Bai and Chimnaji Appa to get rid of Mastani.

In the year 1739, it was decided that the thread ceremony of Raghunath Rao and the marriage of Sadasiva Rao should take place. The orthodox people criticised Baji Rao for his association with Mastani and threatened that they would not officiate at the ceremonies if the Peshwa was present. The Peshwa's son Balaji and Chimnaji Appa forcibly removed Mastani and kept her in confinement. The Peshwa was heartbroken for this was a most unbearable experience to him. Nor could he resort to force to restore Mastani to his care. He therefore retired to Patas. One story goes that Mastani escaped from prison and rejoined Baji Rao. Baji Rao's mother, Radha Bai, sent a trusted friend of the family to the Peshwa to persuade him to give up Mastani and also his drinking habits.

It would appear that the Peshwa agreed to both the suggestions of his mother. However the separation from Mastani began to tell on the health of the Peshwa. He

promised to turn a new leaf in case Mastani was restored to him. Mastani was not sent back to him. On her part Mastani was equally anxious to join the Peshwa. She went on a hunger strike to achieve her objective. Both Chimnaji Appa and Nana Saheb decided to arrest her. When King Shahu came to know of this plan he was greatly disturbed and advised against such a course. He was against any kind of restraints on Mastani and wanted that she should be restored to the Peshwa. In spite of the royal wishes Nana Saheb arrested Mastani. This was too much for even a person like Baji Rao. The Peshwa decided to drown his sorrows on the battlefield. The encounter with Nasir Jang provided an excellent opportunity. The peace of mind which the Peshwa could not get at home and which he wanted to achieve on the battlefield had a touch of tragedy about it. For this happened to be his last campaign.

Of Nizam-ul-Mulk's six sons, Nasir Jang was the most distinguished. The large army which Nasir Jang had collected to help his father at the time of the battle of Bhopal was kept intact by him. With the help of this army, he desired to ward off the attempts of the Peshwa to detach further territories belonging to the Nizam. Already Raghuji Bhonsle had seized the province of Berar. Baji Rao now wanted from the Nizam some more territory which would secure his routes into Hindustan. Nasir Jang would not yield and advanced from Aurangabad towards the end of 1739. The Peshwa also marched and was joined by his brother later. The Peshwa pushed the army of Nasir Jang which retreated into the Aurangabad fort. The fort was closely besieged and Nasir Jang purchased peace (27th February, 1740) by ceding to the Peshwa the two districts of Handia and Khargon in Nemad, south of the Narmada. The Peshwa was thus able to achieve the object of the campaign. During all this time he had very little information about Mastani. This was actually undermining his health and his agony grew day by day. After the war with Nasir Jang was over the Peshwa asked Chimnaji Appa to

return to Poona while his son Nana Saheb proceeded to Kolaba to settle the disputes that plagued the affairs of the Angre brothers. Chimnaji Appa evidently was aware of the distress through which the Peshwa was passing. In a letter to Nana Saheb dated 7th March 1740, Chimnaji Appa wrote: "I have had no news from the revered Rao since we parted. I did my utmost to console his distracted mind, but God, it seems, willed otherwise. I do not know what fate is in store for us. We should send *her* to him upon my return to Poona." Nana Saheb instead of restoring Mastani sent his mother, Kashi Bai to the Peshwa. The Peshwa however was deeply distressed over his inability to obtain the release of Mastani. In this atmosphere of frustration, the Peshwa lingered and a virulent fever caught hold of him. He was then at Raver, on the south bank of the Narmada. "His frame, exhausted by war and labour, harassed by family quarrels and disappointed passion, was unable to resist the attacks of disease."[1] In the presence of his wife Kashi Bai and their little son Janardan, the Peshwa passed away on the 28th April 1740 at the age of forty. He was Shahu's Chief Minister for twenty years — years which were crowded with events, with hardships, tumult and strenuous energy. These were the years which saw the fulfilment of the tasks he had undertaken. According to Sardesai: "As soon as the news of Baji Rao's death reached Mastani she died in the palace of Poona whether by suicide or of shock, it is difficult to say."[2] The other version is that she came to attend the funeral ceremonies of the Peshwa. As a token of her abiding love for the Peshwa, she fearlessly entered the funeral pyre to the wonder and amazement of all who had gathered on that day. Such was the love that bound this most charming

[1] Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 271

[2] Sardesai: "Her dead body was removed to Pabal, a village 20 miles east of Poona, which Baji Rao had granted her in *inam* and where an unpretentious tomb reminds passersby of the story of her love and her tragic end." *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 181

woman of her time to the Peshwa. The Mastani Gate of the Shaniwar Palace at Poona even today reminds passers by of the man and woman who lived and loved and their tragic episode.

Judged by the combined evidence Baji Rao was an outstanding figure. Bred a soldier as well as a statesman Baji Rao personified enterprise, vigour, hardihood and sagacity. If he was great as a soldier he was greater as an organizer and a diplomat. The early training he had under his father inculcated in him the spirit of adventure and a missionary zeal to extend and establish Maratha power. It also imparted to him the quality of perseverance and it was this which enabled him to bring his transactions to a successful end. As a soldier Baji Rao led a disciplined life; he was a stern task master and would demand not only abject obedience from his troops but also great courage, tenacity of purpose and the ability to strive, seek and find and not yield to the enemy. His commanding personality, his fair and handsome features[3] and above all his qualities of head and heart were able to inspire his soldiers and forge them into an instrument for carrying out his ambitious plans. According to Sir Richard Temple, Baji Rao " is remembered to this day among the Marathas as the fighting Peshwa or the incarnation of Hindu energy."[4] He fought to make

3. " So widespread was his reputation for beauty that according to a Maratha legend, the ladies of Nizam-ul-Mulk asked of their lord as a special favour that they might at his next meeting with the Brahmin minister, unseen themselves, catch a glimpse of his fine presence and classic features. At the same time his dress was simple and his face was as meagre as that of any trooper in the field. An amusing story runs that once the Emperor Mohamed Shah, curious to learn something of the appearance of the great soldier who was overrunning his dominions, sent his court artist to paint him. The artist brought back a picture of Baji Rao on horseback in the dress of a trooper. His reins lay loose on his horse's back and his lance rested on his shoulder. As he rode, he rubbed with both hands ears of corn which he ate after removing the husks. The emperor in great alarm cried, "Why, the man is a fiend" and at once begged the Nizam to make peace with him." Kincaid and Parasnis : *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 271

4 Sir Richard Temple: *Oriental Experience*, I, p. 390

the Marathas a powerful nation; he also fought in this attempt powerful adversaries not only from his own people but also from outside.

The military genius of Shivaji secured the freedom of his countrymen. But after his death, the Maratha nation had to undergo severe trials and at one time all was nearly lost. It was only with the return of Shahu to Maharashtra that conscious attempts were made to gather the Marathas once again and launch them on a career of conquest and expansion. Although the powerful Empire ceased to have an unrelenting sovereign like Alamgir, still the Mughal grandees especially Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah, were not prepared to allow the Maratha expansion without a challenge. In fact in the Nizam the Peshwa found a most relentless foe because Maratha hegemony was a menace to the integrity of the Nizam's subah in the Deccan. Time and again Baji Rao had to come to grips with the Nizam. The Nizam had no good opinion of Baji Rao whom he considered as inordinately arrogant. It was the Nizam's grim determination to capture Baji Rao alive or put him to such a rout and plunder that he would never again raise his head. With such an inveterate enemy the Peshwa had to be very careful and employ all his skill and organizing capacity to defeat him. The victories over the Nizam at Palkhed and at Bhopal established the military genius of Baji Rao. The astute Nizam was no match to the Peshwa. The Peshwa could have eliminated his enemy. But at the hour of triumph, Baji Rao's magnanimity outweighed his other motives and the Nizam was spared notwithstanding his defeat at the battle of Bhopal. Under Baji Rao the Maratha cavalry was forged into a powerful insrument not only for preserving the integrity of the Maratha homeland but also for aggrandizement into the neighbouring kingdoms. It was a mobile and austere army which he created. It could move with great rapidity as was the case when the Peshwa outwitted the Mughal armies in the Mathura — Agra area and appeared before Delhi to the utter consternation

of the Mughal Emperor. Its extreme mobility and the enveloping tactics which it adopted to cut off the supplies to the enemy, as for example when it pinned the Mughal army under the Nizam-ul-Mulk in the Bhopal area, gave it a certain superiority over armies trammelled with heavy equipment. Baji Rao was the ablest exponent of "light foray tactics" against which the Nizam with all his skill in leadership and organizing ability could not succeed.[5]

The Peshwa's military power was equalled by his organizing capacity. The Peshwa was "a heaven-born cavalry leader" and it was the mobility and the speed of his horsemen that enabled him to achieve such brilliant success over his adversaries. Although the Peshwa had a foundry[6] to enable the manufacture of artillery and ammunition, still their inadequate supply heavily handicapped him in the wars with his enemies. It was the training which his leadership imparted to redoubtable soldiers like Malhar Rao Holkar, Ranoji Sindia, Damaji Gaikwad, Udaji Pawar and others that enabled the Marathas to extend their sway in Gujarat, in Malwa, in Bundelkhand and in distant Delhi. Moreover in the task of organizing and planning Maratha expansion the Peshwa was ably assisted by his redoubtable brother, Chimnaji Appa, who was at once unique for his sagacity and other virtues. He alone could curb the impetuosity of the Peshwa and solve difficult situations. It was his untiring zeal and devotion to duty that enabled the Peshwa to achieve his objectives. His amiable manners were always availed of by those Maratha nobles who were afraid to approach the uncompromising Peshwa. "It was to Chimnaji Appa that Baji Rao's children turned for that affection which their father, led away by his ambitions and afterwards by his passion for Mastani, denied them. While

[5] Sir Jadunath Sarkar: *Military History of India*, p. 139

[6] Captain William Gordon, the English Envoy visited the foundry in 1739 and he saw "cochorns and bombshells said to have been cast there, and a form of a thirteen inch mortar. I was told they make such with great ease, and have learned the art of running iron for making shot." Forrest: *Selections from State Papers*, Maratha Series, Vol. I, p. 79

Baji Rao incurred gigantic debts for the upkeep of his armies, Chimnaji Appa checked with strict economy the household expenses. It was Chimnaji Appa who saw that Baji Rao's sons were educated, were invested with the sacred thread, were united to suitable wives and taught the high morality and noble truths of the Hindu faith."[7]

Chimnaji Appa, though overshadowed by the splendour and grandeur and the towering personality of the Peshwa, was himself a great soldier. That he was cast in a heroic mould is obvious from the manner in which he responded to the clarion call of Brahmendraswami to defend the fatherland and destroy the Sidis of Janjira. It was Chimnaji's strategy that brought about the destruction of Sidi Sat, the despoiler of the temple of Parasuram. Similarly it was Chimnaji's valour and organizing capacity that enabled the Marathas to conquer Bassein from the Portuguese who possessed superior arms. Despite his failing health[8] he did not rest until the Portuguese flag was removed and the Maratha banner was planted on the fortress of Bassein. Chimnaji's sobriety and perseverance, his soldierly qualities, his honesty of purpose and above all his religious attitude won for him the affections of everyone. Of all the Maratha leaders, Chimnaji Appa was indeed unique in several ways and Maharashtra would have greatly benefitted by his wisdom if he had not passed away so very early in life.

The Peshwa's relations with his king had always been cordial. Not only did the Peshwa carry out the king's commands but also planned the Maratha offensive against the Mughals. Shahu by nature was not an aggressive king. Not having the requisite military training he was content to pass on to the Peshwa the major responsibility of con-

[7] Kincaid and Parasnis: *A History of the Maratha People*, p. 273

[8] "Indeed he had ordered his generals that, if he died, they should ram his corpse into one of their cannons and fire it into the hostile city. Thus in death, if not in life, Bassein would be his dwelling place." *Ibid*, p. 273

ducting the wars and protecting the state from external danger. The king had implicit faith in the capacity of his Peshwa to tackle any situation. He really took a great risk when he selected a youth who was barely twenty to the Peshwaship when there were several other veterans who were eagerly expecting that the choice would fall on any one of them. Shahu was a good judge of men and Baji Rao by his ability justified the choice and rehabilitated the king's position. In his dealings with Shahu, the Peshwa always remembered that the king was the fountain of authority and that the Peshwa was only the king's instrument to implement the royal commands. He was meticulous about the despatches he sent to the king for they contained all the details about the activities of the Peshwa which his sovereign should know. On his part Shahu completely trusted the Peshwa and depended on his iron nerves for everything. The king also at times used to warn his minister if anything went wrong.

In his dealings with the Nizam, Trimbak Rao Dabhade, Sambhaji of Kolhapur and others, the king counselled the Peshwa to be considerate. With regard to the Nizam the king suggested to the Peshwa that he " must on no account inflict any loss upon Nizam-ul-Mulk or injure his susceptibilities. We enjoin this on you as a sacred obligation to the memory of your revered father. " Consequently the Peshwa could not completely eliminate the Nizam. Further Shahu went out of the way to mollify the Senapati Dabhade. In spite of this Trimbak Rao colluded with the Nizam to overthrow the king's authority. Trimbak Rao's defeat and death in the battle of Dabhoi greatly shocked the king because the quarrels of his generals disturbed him. The king stated that Trimbak Rao " intrigued no doubt with the Nizam, in his wickedness he fought against us and he has eaten the fruit thereof. But the lives of my officers have been uselessly wasted. The past can never be effaced. Both sides must now make peace with each other and cease from strife. " Towards his cousin Sambhaji who attempted

several times with the help of the Nizam to become king. Shahu was equally considerate. It was Shahu's conciliatory attitude that finally resulted in the treaty of Warna and the settlement with Sambhaji. Above all, Shahu ever remembered his promise to Emperor Aurangzib that "he would hasten to the rescue of the Empire whenever it was threatened by an invader from outside." When Nadir Shah invaded India, Baji Rao declared that he would lead the army north and drive out the invader. Shahu agreed to this and in a directive for the guidance of the Peshwa he said that while the falling Mughal Empire should be resuscitated it was not his desire to secure the imperial position for himself. The Mughal Empire should be renovated instead of building a new one. "If we attempt the other course [of aggression] it would involve us in enmity with all other neighbours with the consequence that we should be exposed to unnecessary dangers and court a crop of trouble all round. Hence the wisest course for us under the circumstances would be to whole-heartedly support the present Empire; secure only the administrative management for ourselves as the Amir-ul-Umra of the state." But before the Maratha army could advance north Nadir Shah had left Delhi after reducing the imperial city to ruins beggaring description.[9]

Thus the Peshwa had to perform the difficult task of adjusting his policies between the wishes of King Shahu and the urge for expansion. As the Peshwa's stature grew as a result of his military successes over his adversaries, and as the Maratha Empire expanded its frontiers, the foreign traders especially the British noticed that Baji Rao was all powerful and had scant respect for the king. Captain

[9] "For a long time the streets remained strewn with corpses, as the walks of a garden with dead flowers and leaves. The town was reduced to ashes and had the appearance of a plain consumed with fire. The ruin in which its beautiful streets and buildings were involved was such that the labour of years could alone restore the town to its former state of grandeur." Elliot & Dowson: *History of India as Told by Her Own Historians*, Vol. VIII, pp. 88-9

William Gordon reported to the Company after visiting Satara in July 1739, that " Baji Rao is so powerful that he makes small account of the Raja.....as his power is uncontrolled by whomsoever, the Raja is compelled to an exercise of outward civility to him. The sentiments of most are that Baji Rao has in view to throw off his allegiance to the Raja." Gordon therefore advised that the company should deal with Baji Rao carefully. Even Inchbird, a careful observer, was led to the conclusion that to deal with Shahu by ignoring Baji Rao would lead to troubles. There is no doubt that the Peshwa brooked no opposition. The manner in which he dealt with the Pratinidhi and Senapati Dabhade are illustrative of the Peshwa's determination to remove all rivals to power. He could tolerate no opposition from the feudatories from whom he demanded complete obedience to his authority. Those who disobeyed had to be replaced by more reliable men. In all these attempts Shahu saw that the Peshwa was overdoing his part.[10] But it must be stated that the Peshwa wanted neither to undermine the authority of the king nor throw off his allegiance to him as was thought of by Gordon.

Baji Rao was looked upon as the champion of Hinduism. It was a time when the Hindu society was lacking a powerful leader to unite the different sections of that society and enable it to survive. The Mughal Empire was also in its decay and this afforded ample scope for its warring nobles to campaign for their self-aggrandizement. It was at this juncture that Baji Rao entered the scene to restore order and peace. He faithfully carried out the permanent programme chalked out by his father Balaji Vishwanath *viz.*, " the regeneration of religion, of Gods and Brahmans, of the sacred places of Hindu pilgrimage like Benares."[11] Baji

10 That Shahu was perturbed with the activities of the Peshwa will be apparent from the following observation made by him. " The Peshwa has done me real service only on one occasion—in repelling the Nizam. Otherwise his activity and conquests have been for self-aggrandizement."
Sardesai: *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, III, p. 123

11 In a letter to Mahadev Bhat dated the 2nd June, 1740, Chimnaji

Rao declared that his aim was to found a Hindu empire or *Hindu Pad Padshahi*. It was the same tradition which was handed down by Shivaji to his successors. But Shivaji's conception was limited to the confines of Maharashtra and to the Maratha people particularly. Baji Rao, however, had a bigger role. When once the homeland had been secured and the organized Maratha army crossed the Narmada, the whole of Hindustan was looming large before them. To Baji Rao's banner flocked the Hindus outside Maharashtra who looked upon him as the saviour of Hinduism. In this attempt he had the conscious and articulate support of Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur but for whom the Marathas could not have succeeded as well as they have done. It was this universal leadership of Baji Rao that enabled him to appear before the Mughal capital undaunted. It was also this unifying spirit that made the successors of Peshwa Baji Rao, the arbiters of the fate of the Mughal Empire, carried their banner to the banks of the Indus, while their cavalry was everywhere in the country from Lahore to Murshidabad, from Delhi to Tanjore. It is apparent that most of Baji Rao's wars had a religious character. " In the conquest of Malwa he had secured the alliance of the Hindus, in his war against the Sidis he was avenging the desecration of Hindu temples, in his war against the Portuguese he was undoubtedly fighting for Hinduism, inasmuch as the inquisition in Portuguese India made it impossible for Hindus to profess their faith in peace. And when the Bundela chief, Chhatrasal, found his municipality threatened by the Pathan Nawab of Far-

Appa stated : " Baji Rao was asked to bring to obedience all those who had flouted the authority of the emperor, to nourish the interests of the poor ryots, to effect peace and prosperity in the distracted lands to replenish the imperial treasury and thus to deserve favours from the emperor and earn for himself transcending fame for having set his power right. For this the late Peshwa exerted himself assiduously for eight long years in co-operation with Sawai Jaisingh. The undertaking was all completed, in spite of severe trials and obstacles caused by disloyal elements."
Sardesai : *New History of the Marathas*, Vol. II, p. 199

rukhabad, he hurried for protection to Baji Rao as the acknowledged leader of the Hindus in India. The lover of Mastani knew well how to appeal to the religious sentiments of his co-religionists although he could scarcely be considered an orthodox Brahman."[12]

There is no doubt that the Maratha Empire owed much of its glories to Peshwa Baji Rao who had both "the head to plan and the hand to execute."[13] It is true that "he made no attempt to mould or reform the political institutions of the state in a way that would benefit his people permanently."[14] But the system which was handed down to him was such that if the Peshwa were to reform it then he would have failed and much less would he have carried the Maratha banner far and wide. Barely within a short time after the death of Shivaji, his military reforms were abandoned because his successors, Sambhaji and Rajaram, had not the great king's ability and vision. In fact, Rajaram, when threatened by the onrush of the Mughal army, was content to relegate kingly authority to the two Brahman ministers, Prahlad Niraji and Ramachandra Pant Hukmatpanha and take refuge in Gingee. With practically no central government and with an empty treasury Maharashtra under Ramachandra Pant Hukmatpanha had to defend itself from the might of Aurangzib's army. The only method by which this could be done was by the feudalisation of the army and the state. Hereditary fiefs and *jagirs* were given to successful warriors who established themselves in these territories and adopted whatever means that were open to them to keep the army and control the place from the attacks of the Mughal forces. Thus exclusive spheres of influence were created. In this way "Khandesh and some part of Balghat were reserved for the Peshwa; the Senapati received Baglan and Gujarat; to the Sena

12 S. N. Sen: *Military System of the Marathas*, pp. 58-9 (Orient Longmans, 1958)

13 Grant Duff: *History of the Marathas*, Vol. I, p. 393

14 Dighe: *Peshwa Baji Rao I and Maratha Expansion*, p. 208

Saheb Subha was assigned Berar and Gondwana and all the territories to the east; the Sarlaskar was in charge of Gangthadi and the province of Aurangabad, while the districts between the Nira and the Warna were left to the Prathinidhi's care. These chiefs were to collect *chauth* from the territories assigned to them; they could, if they liked, extend their activities further in their immediate neighbourhood. They were to make a stipulated contribution to the royal treasury and to meet the expenses of some of the *karkhanas* or royal establishments; within their fiefs they were to exercise sovereign authority without any interference from the Raja. Thus peace at home and expansion abroad were at once provided for."[15] In the hands of Baji Rao this system worked well because the Peshwa was a great leader of men and was able to exercise authority over and exact obedience from the *jagirdars* who provided the necessary soldiers and the finances for the running of the Maratha State.

Thus the great qualities of head and heart which found a happy combination in Peshwa Baji Rao enabled him to lead the Maratha nation from its homeland into the heart of Hindusthan as an imperial power and stand forth as the defender of Hinduism. For twenty years his cavalry scoured the country and was victorious over the enemies — Nizam-ul-Mulk, the Mughal army, the Sidis of Janjira and the Portuguese. Despite the severe opposition from some quarters to his policy, young Baji Rao controlled the disgruntled veterans of the Maratha court, and in the noontide of his career the Peshwa was feared and obeyed. His open liaison with Mastani which was like that of Pericles' with Aspasia filled the orthodox section with anger. But they could not openly challenge the Peshwa on this account. Baji Rao was a great lover, a great leader of men and a greater organizer. It was the imperial policy which this romantic Peshwa enunciated and successfully carried

[15] S. N. Sen: *Military system of the Marathas*, p. 47

out that enabled the Marathas to become the arbiters of the destinies of the Mughal Empire. To his son Balaji Baji Rao, he bequeathed a confident nation proud of its achievements and the promises it held out. It was this confidence that emboldened Shahu to exhort Balaji Baji Rao to lead Maratha horsemen beyond the walls of Attock.

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